

## LESSON 4

### THE CROSS AND MISSIONS

#### Introduction

The Cross stands at the very heart of missions. As Christians our salvation depends on what Jesus Christ did for us at Calvary. Jesus lived a life of the Cross during His entire earthly existence. By that statement, we mean that He habitually chose the Father's will in preference to His own. He died daily to selfish needs. The Cross forms the very centre of our message. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The Cross is central in missions because it gives a pattern for our lives. Jesus clearly set forth the principle of the Cross as the cost of discipleship: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

The spirit of the Cross in missions finds clear illustration in the lives of Dr. and Mrs. George Lacy, pioneer missionaries to Mexico. In 1903 the Lacys arrived with their five children in the northern Mexican town of Saltillo. For nearly a year they had presented the Gospel when their fifteen-month-old baby sickened and died. The next morning the youngest son died of the same fever. Quickly they decided to take their other children to their home in Arkansas (U.S.A.). By the time they reached Texarkana (Arkansas, U.S.A.), the other children also were sick. In spite of the efforts of doctors, the other three children died. The entire family of five children died within two weeks.

Discouraged, Dr. Lacy said to his wife, "We will give it up."

Mrs. Lacy replied, "We have given our children for Mexico; now we will go back and give our lives." They did give their lives in a long and fruitful service in Mexico, preaching Christ and training young Mexicans for the ministry. They lived out the spirit of the Cross.

#### The Daily Death of Jesus

Jesus' life was a crucified life. Not only at Calvary did He die, but He died daily to self so that the Father's will might be perfectly expressed in Him.

On a number of occasions, Jesus spurned the self-way to follow the Father's way. The temptations represented the devil's effort to tempt Christ to take the easy way—to think of self-indulgence—rather than walk the road that

*Jesus lived a life of the Cross in that He chose the Father's will in preference to His own. He died daily to selfish needs.*

*(own, needs)*

*The Cross is central in missions because:*

- 1. Our \_\_\_\_\_ depends on Calvary.*
- 2. The principle of the Cross is the cost of \_\_\_\_\_--denial of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(1. salvation; 2. discipleship, self)*

had a cross at the end of it. Satan sought to entice Christ to satisfy human desires and needs with the powers that were meant for the redemption of humanity. He offered Jesus a shortcut to the world's adoration without the Cross, but Jesus kept His vision steadfastly set toward the Cross.

His mother, brothers, and sisters all tried to get Jesus to retire from conflict with the religious leaders that would end in His death. At each step along the way, He died to self. By His rejection of the easy way out, the world came to have a Saviour. "Thy will be done" was the Victor's cry in the raging battle between the crucified life and the self-life.

### The Supreme Purpose of Jesus

On several occasions Jesus stated that His life's purpose was the Cross, through which He would save man. He mentioned this purpose in Mark 10:45 when He said that the Son of Man "came . . . to give his life a ransom for many." He stated that the Cross was the reason for which He came into the world.

The Cross bore the same relation to the life of Christ as the eruption bears to a volcano. Forty to fifty miles deep in the heart of the earth, the magma seethes and burns. It turns rocks into molten liquid and begins to build an uncontainable pressure. At last even the earth cannot restrain this surging stream of fire. With incomparable force, the magma explodes through mountain or sea and tosses flaming lava into the air. The lava runs in red streams down the side of the volcano. When the streams have spent their force, they turn into a sluggish river of gray. The eruption is an overt expression of what lay in the heart of the volcano for many centuries.

So too is the Cross in the heart of God. He loved many with a burning love from eternity. At last that eternal love burst forth in flames of love for all men to see at Calvary. The Cross expressed the love that burned in Christ throughout His earthly life.

### The Teachings of Jesus

Jesus warned His listeners from the beginning of His ministry that to follow Him meant death to self. "Life springs only from death" was a central teaching. His teachings about the Cross were of two types—direct and indirect.

#### *His direct teachings*

Jesus' teachings concerning the Cross stand out in several places in the Gospels. "And he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:38-39, RSV).

Satan tempted Jesus by offering Him a shortcut to world adoration without the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Cross)

The supreme purpose of Jesus' life was the \_\_\_\_\_, through which He would save \_\_\_\_\_.

(Cross, man)

FINISH READING THIS TOPIC, THE SUPREME PURPOSE OF JESUS, BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

The eruption of a volcano is an overt expression of what lay in the heart of the volcano for many c \_\_\_\_\_. Thus the Cross was in the h \_\_\_\_\_ of God who loved with a burning love from e \_\_\_\_\_. That eternal love burst forth at C \_\_\_\_\_.

(centuries, heart, eternity, Calvary)

Jesus used two methods of teaching about the Cross—\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Mark, in an action-packed Gospel, expresses the same idea in a slightly different manner. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34, RSV). Self-denial, death to self, and the new life in service to Christ are the steps in the Christian life. Similar passages appear in Luke 9:23; 14:27; and Matthew 27:32. These passages teach that Christians are under orders to use their lives, talents, and opportunities for the glory of Christ.

*His indirect teachings*

Not only did Jesus present the demands of the Cross directly, He also wove the cross-principle into the fabric of much of His teachings. Jesus pointed to His own life as an example of the cross-principle.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24-25, RSV)

Jesus taught that His own life came to full expression only through death. He taught that death must precede life in the Christian. Life comes only as Christians yield themselves to Him. When a church or an individual refuses to respond to its missionary obligation, it begins to die. Saunders states the matter well:

When a church ceases to be missionary, it loses its touch with the Master, and naturally dies of itself. The inspiration of Christian Missions has been the Cross of Christ more than the sermons of men.<sup>1</sup>

When a Christian refuses to let Christ have absolute control of his life, he misses life at its highest. Dedication to the principle of the Cross within your life makes possible the abundant life that springs from the living Christ within you (Gal. 2:20).

**The Dynamic of the Cross**

When Paul said, "the love of Christ controls us . . ." (2 Cor. 5:14, RSV), he spoke of the supreme motivation for Christian missions. Paul was gripped by the fact that the God of the universe had loved him enough to send His only Son for his salvation. That love expressed in the Word made flesh took the onslaughts of sorrow, work, suffering, temptation, and death and remained unchanged. That great love act left an indelible impression on Paul's life. He, too, became love-impelled and taught others the dynamic of the Cross.

When the Christian really understands the message of the Cross, he will participate in Paul's same compulsion to share it. When the harlot was rescued by Jesus from her

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in J. R. Saunders, *The Cross and the Reconstruction of the World* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), p. 19.

*The steps in the Christian life are:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Compare your answers with the text.)*

*Jesus' life was an example of the cross-  
\_\_\_\_\_: "He who loves his life  
\_\_\_\_\_ it, and he who hates his life in  
this world will \_\_\_\_\_ it for  
\_\_\_\_\_ life." (John 12:25)*

*(principle, loses, keep, eternal)*

*When a church ceases to be missionary, it  
loses its touch with the \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Master, dies)*

*The Cross is a dynamic for missions because  
the motive of \_\_\_\_\_ that caused God to  
send His Son becomes the motivation for  
\_\_\_\_\_ others.*

*(love, telling)*

sordid life, she gave a costly gift of perfume, because she had experienced forgiveness, and expressed her new love in a prodigal gift. Conner reflects on the motive power of the Cross:

The spirit of the cross expresses itself in the evangelistic and missionary dynamic of the Christian life . . . . But the New Testament says that the gospel is good news. One wants to tell, one will tell, good news. He cannot suppress it.<sup>2</sup>

The force of love has sent countless missionaries into difficult fields at home and to the ends of the earth for the purpose of exalting Jesus and making Him known. Count Zinzendorf, the great-hearted leader of the Moravians, expressed this love motivation when he said, "I have one passion, and it is He and He alone." The Moravians have taught all Christians a lesson in sacrifice. Long before Carey, Moravian missionaries chose the most difficult and unhealthy fields in which to serve their Lord. They found their motivation in love and a personal dedication to Jesus Christ.

John Newton, the hymn writer, could never forget what he owed to Christ. Newton had been a slave-trader, trafficking in the bodies of men. By a strange turn of fortune, Newton himself became a slave of a former slave woman in Africa, who forced him to eat crumbs that fell from the table. God finally rescued him from that plight. In later times, he remembered those days and penned a hymn that still inspires Christian congregations around the world.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost,  
But now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

Newton describes the gratitude and love that gave his life its powerful dynamic:

That tenth of March is a day much to be remembered by me; and I have never suffered it to pass unnoticed since the year 1748. For on that day—March 10, 1748—the Lord came from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.<sup>3</sup>

Newton's life was filled with gratitude. Because of that loving gratitude, he continually told people about the Christ who had died for him and done so much for him. He wrote the great hymn, "Amazing Grace." This motivation of life, forgiveness and gratitude found at the Cross, was the driving force in the lives of Saul of Tarsus, Augustine of Hippo, and Spurgeon of London. Loving gratitude became the dynamic of their lives and expressed itself in service.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Thomas Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> F. W. Boreham, *A Bunch of Everlastings* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1920), p. 229.

Count Zinzendorf said, " I have one  
p \_\_\_\_\_, and it is H \_\_\_\_\_ and He alone."  
  
(passion, He)

John Newton was a \_\_\_\_\_ writer who had  
once been a slave-trader and a slave.  
  
(hymn)

Newton expressed his gratitude to God by  
\_\_\_\_\_ people about Christ and by writ-  
ing the hymn " \_\_\_\_\_."  
  
(telling, Amazing Grace)

List three others whose lives were motivated  
by loving gratitude. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

## Home Study Exercise

### Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Explain the expression "Jesus lived a life of the Cross . . . ." \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Give two reasons why the Cross is central in missions. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How did Satan try to tempt Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Give the supreme purpose of Jesus' life. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Explain how a volcano illustrates the relation of the Cross to God's love. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. List the two types of teaching concerning the Cross we find in the Gospels. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. List the steps in the Christian life as described in Mark 8:34, Luke 9:25, and Matthew 27:32. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Explain the term "cross-principle". \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What happens to a church when it ceases to be missionary? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. In what way is the Cross a dynamic for missions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. How did Count Zinzendorf express his motivation for missions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What was John Newton's business? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What happened to him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. How did he express his gratitude to God for saving and lifting him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What was the driving force in the lives of Paul, Augustine, and Spurgeon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

1. How did Jesus' actions during His earthly ministry show His love for all peoples? (See Matt. 8:5-13, 28-34; 15:21-28; John 4:4-26)
2. Why did Jesus, during the last twelve months of His earthly ministry, concentrate on the training of the Twelve? (See Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:1-6, 10; 10:1-24)
3. After studying Matthew 10:38-39, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, and 14:27, write out the principle taught in these Scriptures and show how it relates to missions.

### Advanced activity (Level 3)

Prepare a sermon based on 2 Corinthians 5:10-21 to challenge your church to become more involved in missions and evangelism. (Students preparing for the ministry who are not pastors should prepare the sermon as if they were. Other students may prepare a Bible study lesson instead of a sermon.)

## Seminar Discussion

1. How is the Cross both the message and the dynamic of missions?
2. Compare Jesus' direct and indirect teachings concerning the Cross.
3. Discuss the illustration of the volcano in relation to the love of God and its expression in the Cross.
4. Have students share their sermon ideas with the seminar. Determine if the major objective is to challenge Christians to respond to God's call, to enlist the people in greater missionary support, or to guide the church in involvement in a specific missionary project.