



The Theology of the Cross

Lesson 4: Splinters under the Cross

Goal

- Recognize how cross-bearing is connected to loving our neighbor.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have called us to take up our cross and follow you, yet as we do, we walk in a sinful world among sinful people. Even in our interactions with our fellow believers, we notice the stain of sin. Point us always to your cross and the self-sacrificing love that caused you to serve us in the greatest way possible. Fill us with that same love as we serve those around us. Grace us with your presence today as we study your Word. In your name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

1. Recall a time when you tried to show love to your neighbor, but it was not well-received. What went wrong?

“In this chapter we look at the obstacles to *self* denial, to carrying the cross, that we encounter through those around us. They are splinters under the cross. Those splinters tear at our feet and make it difficult to walk on the pathway of service to all” (p. 92).

The Life of a Christian

2. In 1520 Martin Luther wrote his famous treatise *The Freedom of a Christian*. In it he makes two chief points stated below. What is he saying with each point?
 - a. The Christian is free and subject to no one. (Hint: read Romans 8:1-2.)
 - b. The Christian is a servant and subject to all. (Hint: read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.)
3. In what ways does the doctrine of original sin impact our lives as a servant to all? What should we expect as we lovingly serve others?
4. In what ways can positive or negative expectations affect our service to others?

Love in Action — 1 Corinthians 13

5. The word *love* in this chapter is the Greek word *agape*. “This is a love which in its essence, by definition, seeks the good and the best interest of the object, of the one loved” (p. 94). In what ways does this differ from how *love* (and this chapter) is typically used in the world today?
6. Now, with this definition of *love*, read 1 Corinthians 13 through the lense of *self*-denying service to a sinful neighbor. In what ways does this perspective impact the meaning of these verses?
7. Reread 1 Corinthians 12:4-8a. What is notably missing from them? What does this tell us about how our needs are met? (Hint: read Galatians 6:2).
8. Skim 1 Corinthians 12. What illustration does Paul use in these verses. In what ways does this add to how our needs are met?
9. Read 1 John 4:7-11. The same Greek word *agape* is used in these verses. In what ways does that add to the point John is making here?

Closing Prayer (CW 490:1,2)

Love in Christ is strong and loving, Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving—May his will in us be done!
Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ’s humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, Reaching out in charity. Amen.

For those reading along at home...

1. Give an example of a sliver under the cross. (pages 92-94)
2. What is the Arminian heresy, and why is it so popular? (page 93)
3. How does agape love differ from any other type of love? Name two other types of love. (pages 94-96)
4. Why are we more inclined to show respect and patience to strangers than to family members? (page 98)
5. State some examples of slivers that come from our memories. (pages 108,109)