I. The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

a) Over the past twenty years, the Lord has progressively taught me many wonderful truths. In the mid-nineties, I spent five to ten years studying the bride of Christ and the importance of making ourselves ready. Along the way, I also began learning about the importance of prayer, fasting, and worship. Following this, for a ten-year period, I buried myself in books and commentaries about the end times, researching all the details about the great and terrible day of the Lord and how the end of the age would unfold. With this understanding firmly established, I then immersed myself in Paul’s epistles, studying Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians, and Philippians meticulously, learning the beauty of justification by faith, our legal position in Christ, what it means to be a new creation, and the life-changing power of grace. For the past five years, I’ve focused upon the overcomers of Revelation 2-3 and their unique destiny for the next age and the ages to come. During this twenty-year journey, I also studied the book of Acts and saw the importance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, revival, and the church impacting culture through preaching, miracles, signs, and wonders.

b) As enlightening and transforming as this journey has been, I always felt that I was missing something. This was especially true a few years ago, when I spent several months teaching about the foundations of the gospel from the book of Romans. I knew that the gospel was not God’s ultimate intention, but I couldn’t quite figure out the puzzle piece that I was missing, though I knew intuitively that it was a vital piece that connected all the other pieces to give a clear picture of God’s grand masterplan.

c) It was not until recently, when I went to hear Terry Bennett teach, that I began receiving a revelation of God’s eternal purpose. Early in the morning in Dickson, Tennessee, drinking a cup of coffee in the lobby of our hotel while my wife was sleeping, the Holy Spirit began teaching me from the book of Ephesians. For the first time, I realized that Paul wrote this book to unveil one of his greatest passions—God’s eternal purpose that was established before the foundation of the world. My eyes were opened and I saw how the entire book of Ephesians was given to reveal God’s eternal plan to His people. I was so filled with joy and excitement that I couldn’t wait to get home, start writing, and begin teaching these life-changing truths!

d) Perhaps the greatest thing I learned was that God’s eternal purpose was like the missing piece of a puzzle that connected all the other pieces that I had learned about over the past twenty years. See the picture below to see what I’m talking about.
e) For example, I saw how the bride of Christ, as an inheritance for the Son, was God’s ultimate intention established in the eternal council of the Godhead. I realized that the gospel, which Paul wrote about so frequently, was much deeper than merely getting us saved from hell; it was God’s redemptive plan that restored us back to His ultimate intention. I also became uncomfortably aware that ninety-nine percent of my prayers would be unnecessary if the fall had not occurred and that so much of my praying was not centered in God’s eternal purpose. Instead, my prayers were largely self-centered requests focused on me getting what I wanted rather than God getting what He wanted.

f) I also saw how the end times were not just some random time frame where a mean and angry God pours out His wrath upon a wicked and perverse generation while the antichrist is permitted to terrorize God’s people. Instead, my eyes were opened to see that the end of the age is when God’s ultimate intention, established before the foundation of the world, would begin to be fully accomplished. Furthermore, after being enlightened about God’s original plan for mankind, my study of the overcomers from Revelation 2-3 made much more sense, for it was God’s intention from the beginning for humanity to be coheirs with His Son and for us to rule and reign with Him as His equally-yoked bride.

g) I also realized what had been missing from so many calls for revival. Though I’m undoubtedly in favor of revival, I always wondered, “Then what?” I couldn’t quite answer the “then what?” part of the question until I understood God’s ultimate intention. Once my eyes were opened, however, I understood that a revival, where the church is awakened, the Spirit is poured out, and massive numbers of lost people get saved, must lead back to God’s ultimate intention or else much of it will fall far short of what God desires. Revival, from God’s perspective, is always for the ultimate purpose of making the bride ready, of increasing the Father’s family of Christ-like sons, and of releasing the life of Christ into the heart and soul of His people in fullness.

h) In addition, understanding God’s eternal purpose helped me realize that many of the blueprints for today’s popular church models are not based upon God’s eternal purpose. Take, for example, the popular Seeker-Sensitive Church model. This model, which has swept through the western world, aims to create a church service that is so excellent and attractive to the unchurched that attenders will love it, will come back the next Sunday, and will invite several friends to come with them. To achieve this goal, the church service is crafted to give attenders an uplifting experience with quality music that stirs the emotions and a culturally relevant message that stimulates the mind. This model, uniquely designed and created for the seeker, has produced many good results, including leading many people to Christ, helping the unchurched come back to church, and jumpstarting millions in their Christian journey. So we praise God for that! Anything that leads people to Christ is worth applauding. Nevertheless, the Seeker-Sensitive Church model makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for God’s ultimate intention of having a worthy bride for His Son and a family of Christ-like Sons to be fulfilled. Why? Because this model is inherently self-centered. It is a model based upon seekers getting what they want rather than God getting what He wants. Though this model attracts multitudes of people, it rarely, if ever, exhorts attenders to take up their cross and to deny themselves—a critical component of the bride making herself ready and of God’s children maturing into Christ-like sons.

i) With all of this in mind, let’s spend the rest of this session looking at how God’s eternal purpose is the missing puzzle piece that connects the gospel to His ultimate intention. Specifically, let’s look at how the gospel restores us back to God’s original plan for mankind.

II. Original Intention and Redemption

a) As we saw in Session 4, if the fall had not occurred, there would have been no need for the cross. The tree of life would have imparted the life of Christ into Adam and Eve and transformed them progressively into the image of the Son. Subsequently, the implanted life of Christ would have been multiplied through Adam and Eve to the entire human race, making Adam the federal head of a creation in full union with the eternal Son.
b) Because Adam chose the forbidden fruit, however, God’s ultimate intention was delayed. As the covenant representative of humanity, Adam’s choice has affected the entire human race for over six-thousand years, both imputing his choice to us and imparting his nature in us. Now that mankind is inherently selfish and hostile to God, the cross became an absolute necessity to restore us back to God’s ultimate intention.

c) See the chart below that shows how the cross restores us back to God’s ultimate intention.

![Original Intention & Redemption Diagram](chart.png)

**Original Intention & Redemption**

- **God’s Eternal Purpose**
  - Creation (B)
  - Choice (C)
  - The Fall

- **Son’s Life** (D)
- **Fullness of Life** (E)
- **God’s Inheritance** (F)

- **God’s Inheritance**
- **Fullness of Life**
- **Son’s Life**
- **Choice**
- **Creation**

**III. The Work of the Cross and the Way of the Cross**

a) While Jesus was being crucified, He cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30). With this statement, the self-centered, antichrist nature of the entire Adamic race—all of the good and all of the evil—was dealt a brutal death-blow on the cross.

b) On the cross, all that was of the Adamic race was imputed to Jesus Christ, and when He went into the grave, sin, self, and death went with Him. What the "last Adam" accomplished on the cross is the only solution for all the ramifications of the first Adam's transgression in the garden, for in Adam all are sinners but in Christ all are righteous; in Adam all are condemned but in Christ all are justified; in Adam all will die but in Christ all have eternal life (1 Cor. 15:45).

c) Jesus’ death on the cross has dealt with the old creation in Adam once-and-for-all and has paved a way for mankind to be restored to God’s original intention. This is the work of the cross.

d) *The work of the cross* is what Jesus finished for us and determines our legal position, for in Christ we are constituted righteous, crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, ascended, and enthroned.¹ That means we are the righteousness of God in Christ and have died to sin, self, and the Law through our union with Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.² This legal position is imputed to us through the finished work of the cross. Connecting this to God’s eternal purpose, it is the work of the cross that restores us to the place where Adam would have initially been if he had eaten from the tree of life.

e) *The way of the cross*, on the other hand, is what the Holy Spirit finishes in us as He works to harmonize our living condition with our legal position. It is the way of the cross that actualizes the finished work of the cross in our daily experience. It is not enough for us to only have a constituted position of righteousness; we must become righteous in how we live. It is not enough for us to be
positionally crucified, buried, and resurrected; we must allow the Holy Spirit to conform us to the
death of Christ so that we might also experience His resurrection life. Whereas the work of the cross
is a constituted position based upon covenant, the way of the cross is life-based, where we learn to
live by the life of Another—the very life of God’s Son who lives in us.

f) The work of the cross restores us to where Adam would have been initially if he had eaten from the
tree of life while the way of the cross is how we move from the imparted life of Christ toward the
fullness of Christ and God’s ultimate intention.

g) The table below summarizes the distinctions between the work of the cross and the way of the cross.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Work of the Cross</th>
<th>The Way of the Cross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus finished it for us.</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit is finishing it in us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determines our legal position.</td>
<td>Establishes our living condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is constituted and imputed to us because of covenant.</td>
<td>Is actualized in our experience as the Holy Spirit progressively becomes our life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

h) The two charts below illustrate how the work of the cross and the way of the cross relate to ultimate intention.
IV. Six Truths Related to the Work of the Cross

a) As previously stated, the work of the cross is what Jesus finished for us, it determines our legal position, and it restores us to where Adam would have initially been if he had eaten from the tree of life. Though this is a vast subject that is covered in-depth in an entire Lifeschool class, let’s summarize six important truths about the finished work of the cross so that we can better understand how it relates to God’s ultimate intention.

1. The blood of Jesus wholly satisfies God.

   - When the eternal, uncreated, fully divine Son of God became a Man and died on the cross, Jesus’ perfect blood fully satisfied God. Through Jesus’ work on the cross, God satisfied Himself by substituting Himself for us. Jesus died as our substitute and His sacrifice has completely satisfied the Father.

   - As our substitute, Jesus sacrificed Himself by shedding His blood and it’s His blood that atones for our sins. The blood of Christ is at the heart of the atonement and provides for the forgiveness of sins, justification, redemption, reconciliation, access to the presence of God, a cleansed conscious, and victory over the devil’s accusations.³

2. All that is true of Christ is imputed to us.

   - As previously mentioned, whenever a covenant was cut between two parties, a covenant representative was always selected on behalf of each group. These representatives entered the covenant on behalf of everyone in their party and would thus bind the entire group to the expectations of the covenant agreement. Everyone who belonged to a particular party was considered to be “in” its representative, so that everything the representative did and agreed to in making the covenant would be imputed to each member of the group. Thus, whatever the covenant representative did and agreed to in the covenant ceremony would be reckoned to be true of everyone in the covenant representative’s party. This can be summarized by the phrase imputation by representation.

   - Since impute is not a familiar word to most of us, let me quickly define it. To impute is to attribute or ascribe to a person; to assign as a characteristic; to credit to one’s account; or to reckon something as belonging to someone.
• In a legal sense, the term imputed is used to place responsibility or blame on one person for acts of another person because of a particular relationship, such as a mother to a child, a guardian to a ward, an employer to an employee, or a business associate to a business associate. For example, a child's negligence in driving a car without a license may be imputed to the parent. Did the parent drive the car without a license? No. But in a court of law, because of the parent's relationship to the child, the child's offense is imputed to the parent, so that the parent is treated by the judge as if they drove without a license.

• As our covenant representative in the New Covenant, all that is true of Christ is imputed to us and we are therefore reckoned to be righteous, crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, ascended, and enthroned. \(^4\)

• Because we are in Christ, who is our covenant representative, our legal position is that we are righteous and dead to sin, to self, and to the Law. \(^5\) Legally speaking, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places and are overcomers. \(^6\) This is our constituted legal position because of the finished work of the cross by our covenant representative and it is the basis for all of God’s dealings with us.

3. **We are justified by faith.**

• Because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us, we are justified by faith in the finished work of the cross. Paul said, "The free gift [the gift of imputed righteousness] arose from many transgressions resulting in justification" (Rom. 5:16, emphasis mine).

• Justification is a judicial pronouncement that one is innocent in a matter and is therefore acquitted from every charge, accusation, and punishment. Think of justification as the opposite of condemnation. When a judge pronounces condemnation, the person condemned is deemed guilty of a crime and is sentenced to some form of punishment, whether time in jail, the revoking of a driver's license, or community service. Justification, on the other hand, means that a judge reviewed a case carefully, found the accused innocent, pronounced a verdict of not guilty, and withheld any form of punishment.

• Justification is different from pardon. Whereas pardon removes a penalty or debt, justification goes a step further and bestows a righteous status. Pardon says to the guilty, "You may go free; you have been released from the penalty that your sin deserves." Justification, on the other hand, says, "You may go free, for you are righteous in the matter in which you were accused." Pardon is the remission of punishment, though guilty; justification is the declaration that no ground for punishment exists. Thus, justification involves two components: the declaration of righteousness and the remittal of punishment.

• Justification not only differs from pardon but also from sanctification. To justify is to declare or to pronounce righteous, not to make righteous. Sanctification is to make righteous. Put a little differently, justification gives us a new status while sanctification gives us a new nature. Every justified believer has been regenerated and is now progressing down the road of sanctification.

4. **The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit the moment we are born again.**

• Without the indwelling Spirit, there is no born-again experience, no salvation, no eternal life. Paul made this clear when he said, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9). He also exhorted the Corinthians to test and examine themselves to see if they were truly in the faith. The litmus test of salvation is that "Jesus Christ is in you—unless you fail the test" (2 Cor. 13:5).
- Because of the indwelling Spirit, we have within us shekinah glory, rivers of living water, resurrection life, creative power, divine enablement, truth, help in times of need, the anointing enabling us to do God’s will, the life and virtue of Christ, the wisdom and knowledge we need to solve problems and make sound decisions, and the kingdom of God.  

- As we saw in Session 4, God’s eternal purpose has always been “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Through the finished work of the cross, God’s ultimate intention of putting Christ in humanity has been realized, for the life of Christ has been implanted within us through the Holy Spirit, who is called the “life-giving” Spirit and the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:2). The moment we were born again, the life of Christ was implanted within our spirit in seed form.

5. **We are new creations in Christ.**

- Over five-hundred years before Christ was born, Ezekiel prophesied what would transpire in the New Covenant, stating, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezek. 36:26-27).

- Ezekiel said that God would do four things in transforming us into new creations, which are: 1) Put a new spirit within us; 2) put His Spirit within us; 3) remove our heart of stone; and 4) give us a new heart that is soft and pliable.

- Because of the finished work of the cross and the indwelling Holy Spirit, our spirit has been raised from the dead and is now one with the Holy Spirit, a partaker of the divine nature, righteous, holy, and complete, and recreated in the image and likeness of God. Not only that, but when we were born again, we were given a new heart that was cleansed from sin and is now being prepared and molded for the Spirit of Christ to dwell in fully.

- The finished work of the cross and the indwelling Holy Spirit have made us fundamentally new creations. We are not mere men and women, like those of the Adamic race; we are a new creation with a righteous spirit, a new heart that has been cleansed from sin and is now being shaped into a dwelling place of the Spirit, and we have the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling inside of us. When we have a revelation of what it means to be new creations in Christ, everything changes!

6. **We are children of God and the betrothed bride of Christ.**

- When we were born of the Spirit, we became children of God with the Son’s very own DNA implanted into our spirit. We now have Christ’s spiritual genetics as part of our innate spiritual nature, making us children of God. John said, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

- Not only has the finished work of the cross transformed us into God’s very own children, but we were also betrothed to Christ as His bride. All who have said “yes” to Christ’s finished work on the cross have participated in a betrothal ceremony with Jesus, the Bridegroom God (2 Cor. 11:2).

- Just as the betrothal ceremony in the ancient Jewish wedding system was a legally binding commitment—requiring a certificate of divorce if the couple wanted to separate before the actual marriage ceremony—we have been joined to Christ as His bride by the new birth.

- The Jews used to consider the betrothal ceremony as an act of purchasing or acquiring a wife for the purpose of marriage. With this in mind, when Jesus died for us on the cross, not
only was He paying the penalty for our sins; He was also purchasing us as a bride for Himself. When we are born again, we belong completely to Jesus as His very own possession—we are His bride bound to Him by betrothal.

b) Because the finished work of the cross is such glorious news, it’s easy to see why many believers never move beyond this into God’s ultimate intention. They camp out at the work of the cross and never progress into the way of the cross. As a result, many fail to come into God’s ultimate intention, for this can only be realized through the way of the cross, which is God’s prescribed method to lead us from the initial impartation of Christ’s life into the fullness of Christ and becoming God’s inheritance.

c) With this in mind, let’s spend some time now looking at the way of the cross. This will help us to see how the way of the cross moves us from the work of the cross to God’s ultimate intention.

V. Six Truths Related to the Way of the Cross

a) Contrasted to the work of the cross, the way of the cross is what the Holy Spirit is finishing in us as He aligns our living condition with our legal position. The way of the cross is how we move from the finished work of the cross into God’s eternal purpose. Again, this is a vast subject that is covered in-depth in an entire Lifeschool class, but for now, let’s summarize six important truths about the way of the cross so that we can better understand how this leads us into the fullness of Christ and becoming God’s inheritance.

1. The way of the cross sanctifies our soul.

   • Scripture reveals that we have been saved, we are being saved, and that we will be saved (Eph. 2:5,8; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; Rom. 5:9; 1 Cor. 3:15). Paul makes it clear that salvation is a process of justification, sanctification, and glorification that relates to our spirit, soul, and body.

   • Whereas the work of the cross relates to our spirit being saved and our justification, the way of the cross relates to our soul being saved through the slow and often painful process of sanctification.

   • Unlike justification, sanctification is not something that can be imputed or reckoned to us. Sanctification is the result of us being consecrated (set apart for God) and is a gradual process in our soul that occurs as we obey the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

   • Whereas justification is instant, imputed to us, and gives us a new standing before God, sanctification takes a lifetime, is the result of works, obedience, and faithfulness, and transforms our character.

2. The way of the cross saves our soul.

   • The tree of the knowledge of good and evil killed our spirit and has deeply affected our soul, making all of us our own independent gods who do what is right in our own eyes. Because of the fall, we are inherently selfish men and women who are prideful, narcissistic, fixated on the image that we project to others, self-aware, self-conscious, rebellious, independent, and lawless.

   • Thankfully, when we were born again, our spirit was instantly conformed to the image of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:24). Because the work in our spirit is complete, the Holy Spirit’s emphasis is almost entirely upon our soul. He jealously wants to conform the proud, independent, selfish nature that we inherited from Adam into the humble, meek, selfless nature of Christ and this will take a lifetime. That is why the salvation of the soul, through the way of the cross, is essential to get us back to God’s ultimate intention.
Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).

When you realize that the Greek word for “life” in this verse is psychē and means soul—the mind, the will, and the emotions—you begin to see how the way of the cross is related to the salvation of the soul. Jesus was basically saying, “If you take up your cross, deny yourself, and refuse to live for what you want when you want it—choosing instead to follow Me no matter the challenge, no matter the discomfort, and no matter the cost—then this will lead to the salvation of your soul.”

The way of the cross—or the cross-life—is Christianity 101. It’s the only way that our soul can be saved. Paul said that “I die daily” (1Cor. 15:31). Jesus exhorted us to take up our “cross daily” (Luke 9:23). Embracing the cross in our soul day after day, where we ask for and allow the Holy Spirit to crucify our self-life and resurrect it in union with Himself, is how our soul is delivered from the effects of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and transformed into the image of Christ.

The way of the cross is God’s prescribed method to lead our soul into the fullness of Christ and conformity to His image. It is how our soul is transformed from being lovers of self who are proud, independent, and rebellious to being lovers of Christ who are humble, meek, and obedient.

3. The Holy Spirit wants to align our living condition with our legal position.

Because Christ is our covenant representative in the New Covenant and we are in Him through faith, our constituted, legal position is that we are righteous, crucified, buried, resurrected, ascended, and enthroned.13

Though meditating upon our legal position in Christ is powerful and transformative, the Holy Spirit is jealous to align our living condition with our legal position. He wants to make the work of the cross real in our soul and for us to experience His resurrection life daily.

It is not enough to be positionally righteous yet still struggle with sin; the Holy Spirit wants us to live righteously and overcome sin. It is not enough to be positionally crucified with Christ yet still live for ourselves; the Holy Spirit wants to abolish every form of selfishness in us. It is not enough for us to be positionally resurrected yet still wallow around in death; the Holy Spirit wants us to live by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Unless we ask for and allow the Holy Spirit to actualize the finished work of the cross in our daily experience we will never have the fullness of Christ in our heart and soul, we will never be conformed into the image of Christ, we will never become the Lord’s inheritance, and we will never come into God’s ultimate intention.

Paul said, “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). This is our legal position in Christ through the finished work of the cross. Though powerful, it is not enough to overcome the inherent selfishness in our unrenewed soul and unredeemed body. That is why Paul also said, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5, NKJV). “You have died” is our legal position. “Put to death” is our living condition.

Paul said that “I have been crucified with Christ” yet he also wanted to be “conformed to His death” (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). The first is a statement of legal position; the second a desire to be aligned in his living condition.
• Much of the Christian journey is becoming what we already are. We have died therefore we must die. We are righteous therefore we must live righteous. We have been crucified therefore we need to be conformed to Christ’s death. We have been resurrected therefore we must live by His resurrection life.

• As our living condition aligns with our legal position, we move toward God’s ultimate intention.

4. The cross works in our self-life to release the fullness of the Spirit into our heart and soul.

• When we were born again, the Holy Spirit came inside of us and took up residence in our spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Yet His goal is not to remain in our spirit in seed form, but to be released in fullness into our heart and soul. For this to happen, the cross must first work to circumcise our heart, cutting away the sin and selfishness that hardens us and stifles the full release of the Spirit.

• Solomon said that our heart—which connects our spirit to our soul—is the “spring” from which all “the issues of life” flow (Prov. 4:23, NKJV). That is, our heart is the channel that governs the measure of the Spirit that is released outward into our soul and body. If the condition of our heart—which contains our deepest emotions, desires, beliefs, intentions, motives, thoughts, hopes, attitudes, convictions, and affections—is pure, then the Holy Spirit’s life can flow freely from our spirit into our heart and then outward to our soul. On the other hand, if our heart is filled with lust, pride, anger, bitterness, doubt, unbelief, jealousy, envy, criticism, or judgment, then the life of the Spirit will be suppressed and stifled. That is why we desperately need the cross to circumcise our heart and to prepare it to be the Spirit’s dwelling place.

• Not only does our heart need to be circumcised, but the cross must also work in our soul to break the hard, outer shell of the self-life that keeps God’s life restrained and subdued within us. The self-life contained in our soul is like a hardened shell that must be completely broken by the cross in order for God’s life in our spirit to be fully released into our mind, will, and emotions.

• Jesus said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). There is life in the grain of wheat, but a hard, outer shell restricts this life from being released. Until the outer shell is split open and broken, the wheat cannot sprout and grow. The question isn’t whether or not life is contained within the wheat, but whether or not the outer shell is broken.

• With this in mind, Jesus continued, saying, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:25). Again, the Greek word for “life” means the “soul,” showing how our hard, prideful, selfish soul suppresses the life of the Spirit within us until it is broken by the cross.

• The way of the cross is imperative for Christ’s life in us in seed form to be fully released into our heart and soul. Our heart must be circumcised by the cross and our soul must be broken by the cross so that God’s life in us can flow freely from the inside out, like rivers of living water to a dark and desperate world.

5. The cross works in our self-life so that we learn to live by the life of Another.

• Paul stated the Christian manifesto when he said, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). The Christian
life is the exchanged life, where we learn to live by the life of Another, the very life of the Son of God in us.

- As we saw in Session 4, Christ in you, the hope of glory, is God’s ultimate intention. Jesus came to give us life and for His life to fill us in fullness. Though Christ dwells in the spirit of every born-again believer, most Christians are either ignorant of this truth or they’re too selfish to let Christ live in them. As a result, the dead-raising, universe-creating life of the Spirit is imprisoned within. Nevertheless, for us to come into God’s ultimate intention, the cross must work in our soul until we learn how to live by the indwelling life of Christ.

- Galatians 2:20 describes the exchanged life, where we learn to exchange our self-life for the indwelling life of Christ. For example, we exchange our selfishness for Christ’s love and let the Spirit of Christ be love in us. We exchange our pride for Christ’s humility and let the Spirit of Christ be humility in us. We exchange our anxiety and gloom for Christ’s peace and joy and let the Spirit of Christ be peace and joy in us. We could go on listing this same type of example with all nine of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

- This type of exchange is what Paul meant when he said to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and to “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:12). Because these attributes of Christ already dwell within our spirit since He dwells there, we don’t need to continually ask God to give us more love, peace, and joy. Instead, we need to ask for and allow the cross to crucify our self-life so that Christ’s love, peace, and joy can be fully released into our soul, becoming the love, peace, and joy that we live by.

- As the cross works in our self-life and we learn to live by the indwelling life of Christ, we put ourselves on the road toward God’s ultimate intention that He established before the foundation of the world.

6. The way of the cross transforms us into mature sons of God and makes us ready as the bride of Christ.

- Though we become children of God the moment we were born again, we are far from being mature, Christ-like sons who are ready to rule and reign with Jesus. Nevertheless, it’s the way of the cross that takes us from being an immature child into Christ-like sonship fit for the throne, having the character that can handle all of the responsibility of being a coheir with Christ.¹⁴

- To understand how the cross works to transform us into mature sons, notice what Paul said in Romans 8:13-14, when he said, “If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Though we will look at this in detail in a later session, for now, it’s important to realize that the Greek word for “sons” is huios and is frequently used to distinguish a mature son, who is ready to share in the inheritance of his father, from an immature child unfit for such a weighty responsibility.

- The first part of Paul’s statement—when he said “if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body”—reveals how the Holy Spirit applies the cross to our daily experience. The second part of Paul’s statement—when he said “all who are being led by the Spirit of God, there are sons of God”—reveals the connection between the cross-life and becoming a mature son of God who can handle the weighty responsibility of heirship.

- Likewise, the same is true in our preparation as the bride of Christ. Though we were betrothed to Christ when we were born again, the new birth does not automatically make us ready as a worthy bride for Jesus. This takes years of focused preparation as we invite and
allow the cross to work in our self-life, which puts to death our self-centered nature and transforms us into Christ-centered lovers and Spirit-reliant followers of the Lamb.

- The simplest way to prove this is by first looking at Revelation 19:7, which says that the bride has made herself ready. How does the bride make herself ready? One of the main ways is by overcoming what Jesus listed in Revelation 2-3.

- With that in mind, notice what Revelation 12:11 states about those who overcome. John said, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death” (Rev. 12:11). The word for “life” in this passage once again means “soul” or the self-life, which reveals that one of the hallmark traits of the bride of Christ, who makes herself ready by overcoming, is that she will not love her self-life to death. In other words, the bride who makes herself ready will be a living martyr who may or may not die as a physical martyr, but what’s most important, she will welcome the cross-life so deeply into her soul that she will be known in heaven as not loving her self-life to death. Once again, we see it’s the way of the cross that enables the bride to overcome and to be made ready for Jesus, the Bridegroom.

- In summary, the way of the cross is how we are transformed into mature sons of God and it’s how we make ourselves ready as a worthy bride for the Lamb. Thus, the way of the cross is how we move from the finished work of the cross into God’s ultimate intention.

VI. The Cross and Ultimate Intention

a) In summary, the work of the cross is what Jesus finished for us and provides forgiveness of sins, our legal position of righteousness and union with Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, justification by faith, and the indwelling Spirit, who transforms us into new creations with Christ’s very own DNA implanted into our spirit, making us children of God and the betrothed bride of Christ. It’s the work of the cross that brings us to the place that Adam would have initially been if he had eaten from the tree of life.

b) The way of the cross, on the other hand, is what the Holy Spirit is finishing in us as He aligns our living condition with our legal position. Specifically, the way of the cross is how the Holy Spirit sanctifies our soul, saves our soul, helps release the fullness of His life into our heart and soul, leads us into the exchanged life where we trade our self-life for the indwelling life of Christ, and transforms us into mature sons of God and a worthy bride who has made herself ready. It’s the way of the cross that leads us from the finished work of the cross into God’s ultimate intention.

1 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.
2 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 7:4.
3 Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:9; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:9; Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:13; Heb. 10:19; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 12:11.
4 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.
5 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 7:4.
6 Eph. 2:6; Rom. 8:37.
7 1 Cor. 3:16; John 7:38-39; Rom. 8:11; Gen. 1:2; Col. 1:15-16; John 16:13-14; John 14:16; 1 John 2:27; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 2:16; Luke 17:20-21.
8 Eph. 2:5; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Rom. 8:10; Heb. 12:22-23; Eph. 4:24.
9 Eph. 3:14-19
10 1 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 8:10; Acts 15:9; Eph. 3:17; Rom. 8:11.
11 John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1; Rom. 8:16-17
12 Heb. 12:22-23.
13 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6.
14 Rev. 3:21; 20:6; Rom. 8:17.