The Core of Evangelism Lesson 7

The Cross: The Center We Cannot Move

The cross of Christ is not an act of heroism.

Paul reminds us that a person might give his life for someone good or for a cause he considers just. Yet the cross is different, because Christ did not die for the righteous, but for sinners. When we were still weak, rebellious, and enemies of God, He gave His life for us.

The cross reveals a love that goes far beyond human heroism. That is why the death of Christ has no comparison: no one has ever loved in this way. Jesus Himself said that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). But He gave it for His enemies (Romans 5:6-8).

There are several elements in Jesus and in His cross that make them unique in time and in space.

It was not merely an act of love. Many have suffered for others, but none of those acts has produced what the cross of Jesus produced: forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal life, far beyond the material world.

1. Why is the cross so uncomfortable?

Many admire Jesus as a teacher, a moral example, or a prophet. But the apostle Paul did not say: "We preach Jesus as a teacher." He said: "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

The cross confronts something people do not want to hear:

- my sin is real,

- I cannot save myself,

- I need grace.

2. What the cross reveals about God

The cross shows, simultaneously:

- the justice of God,

- the love of God.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice, to demonstrate His justice and to be both just and the one who justifies those who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26). If God ignored sin, there would be no cross. If God did not love the sinner, there would be no cross either. The cross is the place where both meet.

The cross of Christ happened at an exact moment, in a specific place and time: it is a historical event. The cross was the means; the resurrection is the triumph of God over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:57).

3. What the cross demands of us

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23) "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) It is not simply about admiring a cross. It is about identifying with the One who died on it.

4. The most common mistake

Many want the benefits of Christ. Few want Christ. They want:

- peace,

- purpose,

- help,

- hope.

Many struggle with an inner problem: they want the result without the road, and they do not necessarily want to surrender to the Lord. The cross is not only the instrument of our salvation. It is also the death of our autonomy.

Questions for reflection

1. Am I more attracted to what Christ can give me than to Christ Himself?

2. Have I truly understood why Jesus had to die?

3. Is there an area of my life that I have not yet placed at the foot of the cross?

4. Am I following Jesus, or only admiring Him from a distance?

The heart of the gospel is not that God helps us live our dreams. The heart of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day. The cross without the resurrection would be only a tragedy. Christ rose, and that is why His death has power (1 Corinthians 15:17). Everything else flows from there. When the cross stops being the center, the gospel stops being the gospel.

This lesson is the most important of the entire series, because the cross is the perfect bridge between the lessons on evangelism and the upcoming lessons on the new birth, baptism, and discipleship. Everything flows from the cross: nothing happens before it, or in place of it.

"If Christ died for me, how do I enter into that death and that resurrection?"

There is an enormous difference between our love and the love of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We love with some expectation. They, each in their own role, gave themselves for a purpose. The Father gave His only Son (John 3:16). The Son died on the cross. The Holy Spirit dwells in each one of us and, day by day, knows what the spiritual struggle of each of us is like. This love is unique in the universe.