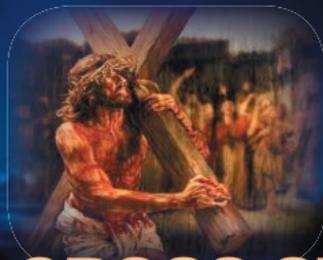


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HUMILIATION & CROSS ST.

We must admit that we are often everything but what the Holy Spirit revealed that we can be our relationships with one another as the body of Christ and with our King. We struggle to live up to the standard of “the mind of Christ” since we joined with Jesus on His incarnational journey to the cross. The mind of the incarnate Son of God often seems beyond our reach. We even think that sometimes we are on the wrong road. We are like Peter when Jesus had turned His face toward Jerusalem, knowing that He was now on His final journey to the cross. Peter earnestly tried to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem, and thus implore Him to make a U-turn. But Jesus rebuked Peter: “Get behind me, Satan?” (Mt 16:23). Peter did not want Jesus to go where he knew there was great despair at the end of the road. Nevertheless, Jesus took Peter and the rest of the disciples on to His destiny that would end on a cross, and eventually, great news for them in reference to their sins.

Peter had just assumed the mind of Satan in order to turn Jesus from doing that for which He came into the world of man to do. At that moment, therefore, Jesus reprimanded Peter with a direct statement: “*You do not have in mind the things of God*” (Mt 16:23).

And so we also often harbor in our minds the mind of the world on our cross-bearing road that to our own humiliation with Jesus. Nevertheless, we must not despair in knowing that we are still not what we want to be, or where we will eventually find ourselves as a disciple of the cross-bearing Son of God. We simply need to remember that we are walking in life with the road map of the mind of Christ that we know should direct our every step (Ph 2:5). So we struggle on in thanksgiving for God's grace and the profound knowledge that Jesus has already passed down this road, and is anxiously waiting for us when we have completed our journey.

Living the mind of Christ involves humiliation and persecution from those who live the mind of the world.

A. Jesus understands:

There is encouragement in the midst of our struggles in knowing that our Lord Jesus knows our predicament. He went down this road of struggle long before we signed up for the journey. Therefore, the gospel example that the incarnate Son of God left with us must be the road map by which we are motivated and directed to continue our journey. In our case, we must thank God that the Son was not detoured by the plea of Peter. Because the Son sought to do the will of the Father unto the end, He continued on His journey, not only to Jerusalem, but also to the humiliation of the cross (See Jn 5:30).

Unfortunately, the influence of the world—and Jesus knows this—often hinders us from following His cross-bearing example. His bar sometimes seems to be too high. However, we must remember that He gave up being in spirit, and in the form of God, in order to incarnate into flesh through which nails would eventually be driven (Jn 1:1,2,14). Assuredly, this is an extreme example, and one we are limited in following. Nevertheless, we would confess that not for one moment would we sacrifice His extreme example for anything less. We would

not because we know the results of His example.

After everything was eventually revealed to Peter by the Holy Spirit, he too would willingly suffer unto death. In fact, Peter wrote that suffering was inherent in following the example of Jesus: “*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name*” (1 Pt 4:16). We fully understand that the Son of God had to take this extreme journey from spirit to flesh, and then to the cross. He had to for us. His journey, therefore, was a necessary suffering for us because it involved all our sins at His expense.

Though we cannot incarnate from spirit to flesh as Jesus did, at least we can focus our thinking off the things of this world in order to focus on that which is beyond this world (See 2 Pt 3:10-13).

Our goal was set by the Holy Spirit in the following statement of Paul: “**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth**” (Cl 3:2).

B. Following the options:

If we believe that God is asking too much for us to remain on this incarnational journey with His Son, or if we fail to allow Him to motivate us to transform our own lives, then we will often choose one of two options:

1. We will simply ignore Jesus and move on and enjoy the things of this world.
2. We will begin the process of transforming into that which we believe He wants us to be.

If we choose the second option, then hang on. This road on our journey is filled with the potholes of trials and suffering. It is as Paul comforted Timothy at a time when Timothy was suffering through persecution: “**Yes, and all who desire to live**

godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tm 3:12).

The transformational journey with Jesus will not be easy. As in the words of Jesus in reference to His own incarnational journey, suffering will be involved along the entire journey (See Mk 8:31).

If our faith does move us to take the road of the second option, then we will allow ourselves to be transformed into the image of Jesus. If we do not want to go down this road, then we will often seek out or establish some religious group of like-minded “faith only” people who have resigned themselves from the incarnational journey (See Js 2:14-26). Such people usually establish a convenient fellowship for their superficial religiosity, which fellowship will accept all non-transformed religionists who want to masquerade as Christians.

It is simply the spirit of idolatry, that if one feels frustrated emotionally concerning his faith, he will often create a god in his mind who is pleased with his existing behavior. He will then establish a ceremonialized religion of rites and rituals that will give him some emotional relief that he is doing just fine as he is.

This is also the curse of legalistic religion. The legalist will create an enclave of comfort in which he can satisfy his faith with meritorious performances of law. The non-transformed have content themselves to believe that if they have meritoriously performed certain legal ceremonies on Sunday morning, whether biblical or traditional, then they are good before God for another week. Such is the belief and behavior of one who truly does not comprehend or appreciate the incarnational example of the Son of God. Such folks do not realize that they are on a road that will eventually take them into an eternal destruction from the presence of God (See 2 Th 1:6-9).

But if we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus' incarnate feet, then we are headed down a road of metaphorical cross-bearing, and sometimes to a literal cross in our end. This is exactly what Jesus had in mind when He admonished Peter, "*Get behind Me, Satan*" (Mt 16:23). Peter was rebuked by Jesus because he did not understand the destiny of his friend Jesus. But when he eventually understood all the truth of the gospel, it was then that he was willing to follow his friend in suffering until the end of his own life. And as tradition reveals, Peter also suffered death by crucifixion at the end of his journey.

Our journey with Jesus often involves the same humiliation that Jesus had to endure on His way to the cross.

C. A voice out of heaven:

The preceding second option of creating a god and religion after our own desires is really no option at all. If we seek to follow Jesus, it is not an option if we seek a better existence in what the Bible describes as an abundant life along our present journey, with heaven as our final destination (Jn 10:10). The price that Jesus paid in order to come from heaven in order to take us back there is simply overwhelming. **We are thus compelled to follow Him.** We cannot, therefore, ignore Him or the price He paid simply because the going gets tough.

Here's why. If we would view the incarnation of the Son of God from the perspective of God the Father in heaven, then the incarnation into the flesh of a baby in a barn in Bethlehem would be a humiliation, not simply an act of humility. Unfortunately, this is almost impossible for human minds to comprehend. What God would willingly transform Himself into the carnal flesh of those He created (Cl 1:16)? And as if that were not enough, this God would allow His incarnate body to be humiliated publicly on a cross at the hands of pompous religionists who cried out for His crucifixion.

The fact that religious leaders throughout history have found it difficult to comprehend an incarnational action on the part of the gods that they have created after their own imagination is proof of the fact that the incarnation of the true God would be expected.

Living incarnationally after such an example, therefore, assumes that we also would be willing to be publicly humiliated for being in fellowship with this God who became as we are. It was this public humiliation about which Jesus spoke to His disciples in Mark 9 on His way to Jerusalem. It was this subject that repulsed Peter. At that time during His earthly ministry, Jesus was bearing a cross in His preaching and teaching. This ministry began at least three years before He was eventually nailed to a literal cross. It was only on His final journey to Jerusalem that He spoke of His suffering and final humiliating end, which end Peter had a difficult time accepting.

D. Cross-bearing discipleship:

It is the cross of living the incarnation throughout their lives that is in the following caution that Jesus gave to His disciples: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me”* (Mt 16:24). Is this not that about which Jesus also warned those who would dare take up this life-bearing cross in order to follow Him unto their own end? *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (Jn 15:18). It is only a cross because of the hate of the world. The world hates that for which Jesus represents, and thus, it will hate every cross-bearing disciple of Jesus throughout the world.

The hate of the world is inherit in bearing the cross of the mind of Christ. If one cannot live with this, but at the same time live with some “level” of faith that soothes his conscience, then he will create a god in his mind that will allow him to live in a world that does not hate him for his indifferent beliefs and behavior. He can thus live with peace of mind, knowing that

all his worldly friends will not criticize him for living out his mediocre faith.

In reference to having in us the mind of Christ, it is worth the cross-bearing struggle in this life to live with the incredible hope that comes with the cross.

E. The Divine humiliation:

Nevertheless, before we would reach for that cross in order to follow Jesus on a road that ends at “the corner of cross and humiliation street,” there is one historical statement we must first seriously consider. We must somehow comprehend the Divine humiliation that the Son of God had to endure during His arrest, and then during His trials as He stood before the worldly-minded Jewish Sanhedrin.

There was an incredible historical statement written by Luke in reference to the maltreatment that Jesus received while He stood before those religionists who presumptuously assumed that they were representatives for God: “*The men who held Jesus began mocking and beating Him*” (Lk 22:63).

The Greek verb tense in this verse is not brought out fully in the English translation. The verb tense in Greek is **past participle**. Properly translated, the past participle would justifiably be translated, “**they kept on beating Him.**” It was not just one slap on the face of Jesus, but a continuous beating of His face, His head and His back. And this was all done by religious people who presumed to be righteous before God, and thus behaving as their supposed god wanted them to behave (See Rm 10:1-3).

The religious world of Jesus' day imagined the God of love in the Bible to be a God who accepted meritorious works of justification. They understood Him to be a God of hate and vengeance who would strike out against innocent people.

The men who constrained Jesus simply kept on striking Him,

one strike after another. Not only did they brutalize His body with one merciless strike after another, they also humiliated Him by spitting in His face (Mt 26:67; Mk 14:65). Therefore, are we willing to take up the same cross that Jesus had to bear on a humiliating road to His own execution? We need to seriously reconsider this before we claim the name “Christian.”

F. Humiliated for us:

All of us might reconsider why we are disciples of such a One who was willing to give up being in spirit that could not be beaten with human hands, in order to incarnate into this world of flesh that could be spit upon and continuously beaten. Therefore, before we jump up and down on Sunday morning crying out, “Jesus, Jesus,” we should probably be falling on our faces, prostrate on the floor in tearful worship of thanksgiving that the Son of God was willing to endure such humiliation for us.

As previously stated, unless we comprehend the extent of His incarnation and the severity of His humiliation, we will have little motivation to proceed further in our own struggle to transform our inner souls. We will often go to a comfortable limit in the transforming process, to a spiritual plateau with which we can comfortably live, and then stop at a point in which there is no inherit hate by the world. We can then find solace within ourselves throughout the rest of our lives with our own self-satisfying religiosity. So do we really want to follow the mandate of the Holy Spirit, who said, “**Present your bodies a living sacrifice**” (Rm 12:1)? Or, is this too much for which to ask? Would God really expect us to emulate the mind of His Son to the point that it would stir up any humiliation by the world?

If we would confess before others that we are Christians, then it is assumed by Jesus that we would, if necessary, be willing to suffer the same humiliation that He suffered on His way to the cross.

G. A necessary elimination:

Since through His incarnational behavior Jesus lived in a manner that drew multitudes to Himself, those of the religious establishment of that day came to the conclusion that they had to rid the religious community of such a person. His influence was at the time becoming quite overpowering. Multitudes were starting to follow Him (Mt 4:23-25). Therefore, lest the religious leaders loose their following of the multitudes, Jesus had to be eliminated.

The common people could see a stark difference between the behavior of Jesus and the arrogant behavior of their own self-righteous religious leaders. For this reason, the religious leaders determined that it was necessary to humiliate Jesus publicly because He lived so much in contrast to their lives in their own self-righteous behavior. In fact, the religious establishment of the day determined to go beyond humiliation, to a scheme of murder: *“Then from that day forth they took counsel together to kill Him”* (Jn 11:53).

The religious leaders actually identified themselves as wolves among the people. They did so because they came to the conclusion that they had to extract from the religious community the One they considered to be in competition with their positions. This Radical Rabbi from Galilee exposed the very core nature of the religion of Judaism, of which they were the leaders. Subsequently, the “theological police” (the Pharisees) cried out before Pontius Pilate that this Jesus, this rebel against their religion, must be extracted from society through execution.

Would we join such a gang of pompous religionists who would cry out that nails be driven through the flesh of this incarnate God (Mt 27:23)? Would we even join in with just one slap on His face? If we seek to live after a self-constructed religio-

ity as the Pharisees, then we have already joined in with this “church” of humiliators. We have already delivered our first slap. And with every willful self-righteous sin against Him, we keep on beating away.

If fact, if we have joined in with a manufactured religiosity after our own desires that is contrary to incarnational membership with Jesus, then our slaps on the face of Jesus happen every Sunday morning when we come together with one another for some concert of self-entertainment, or to meritoriously perform some system of ceremonies that satisfies us with a sense of self-righteousness until next Sunday morning.

With our misguided religiosity, or ceremonial pretensions, we often, as the religious establishment of Jesus' day, continue to slap the humiliated Savior who journeyed to the cross for our sins.

H. Inherent criticism of incarnational discipleship:

Sometimes we are spiritual humbugs who have little comprehension of the good news of the actual incarnation of the Son of God. Those disciples who truly seek to live incarnationally as Jesus are often the object of unjust criticism. The “Pharisees” who lead among us are quick to criticize incarnational servants because these disciples are often the only ones who are doing anything in response to Jesus. So we must not forget that **cross-bearing inherently incurs criticism**. Again, it is as Jesus alerted His disciples, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (Jn 15:18).

Many of the critics, on the other hand, are just sitting idly by warming some bench on Sunday morning. The saying is still true that if you are criticized as a true disciple of Jesus, then you are probably doing something right, or at least doing something, which makes you a disciple, that is, a follower of Jesus. Those who suppose themselves to be Christians, but are not criticized, are usually not doing anything, though they claim

to be disciples of the incarnate Son of God. At least they are not doing that which would bring them into fellowship with the humiliation of the cross of Jesus.

We must not forget that incarnational living embarrasses those who suppose themselves to be Christians, but have contented themselves with a nominal life of faith, or are consumed with thinking and behavior that is more self-righteous than incarnational.

We must not forget that the Pharisees were very religious people. Nevertheless, in their religiosity they kept on beating on the flesh of our incarnate God at the time of His trials. Sometimes we ourselves beat on this incarnate God by the dysfunctional conduct of our own lives. We must constantly remind ourselves, therefore, that every willful sin we commit is a strike against the incarnate body of the Son of God. Nevertheless, because of God's grace, we must understand that He had to be spit upon for our sins (Rm 5:8).

We simply forget that when the Father possibly called from heaven to His Son on earth on the first Sunday morning after the Son's humiliation on the cross, the Son was not able to give a glowing report of numbers in attendance at "His local church."

The Father could have inquired from heaven, "What now is the first Sunday attendance of Your church for which You have worked so hard for over three years to establish, and finally humiliate Yourself on a cross?"

The Son could only have replied, "Just Me. Everyone else has fled."

I. The church of the humiliated:

Now consider the fact that some are so audacious as to claim that in their arrogance and self-righteous religiosity that they are disciples of this humiliated Church Leader from whom an

entire membership once fled (See Mt 26:56). The membership fled regardless of the fact that the Leader lived out the very gospel for which He came into the world to reveal. This may answer the question as to why some preachers preach little on the subject of the incarnation. The subject does not produce a church house full of contributors who are willing to take up a cross and follow a humiliated Founder.

As a leader, living the gospel of Jesus inherently conflicts with our desire to have a great following, or have others focus their attention on us. Being Christian and being narcissistic are at the extreme ends of the behavioral continuum. The first disciples fled because at the time they did not understand fully the implications of the crucifixional humiliation of the incarnate Son of God. But we do. We have in our hands the Textbook that explains in graphic detail the entirety of the incarnational journey of the Son of God. When the Son of God returned to heaven after His incarnational journey, the Holy Spirit took away all our excuses that were based on ignorance. We could never again claim ignorance if we possessed a copy of this Textbook that explains the incarnational journey of the Son of God in detail.

Please keep in mind that in the past we have generally focused on the cross, making the cross of Jesus all about ourselves, which it is. We proclaim, “Jesus died for **our** sins!” And He did. We add, “**We** are redeemed by the cross!” And we are. We continue, “Because He was crucified for **us**, **we** are destined for heaven!” And **we** are! The sacrificial crucifixion was for us, and thus the cross was about us.

But hang on. The incarnation was all about Him giving up being God and coming in the flesh of man. In our faith, it is where we place the most emphasis: on the cross for us or on His incarnation. In placing so much emphasis on ourselves

and our sins, we must not forget that **the cross was made possible because the incarnation was first about Him giving up being God in order to be flesh for us** (Jn 1:1,2,14).

And so, we will not flee from our responsibility to be changed by what the Son of God personally did for us in giving up being in the form of God in order to be humiliated on a cross for us. We will thus continually remind ourselves that if we behave arrogantly, then we have already fled from the gospel nature of the incarnate Son of God who humiliated Himself in order that we be as He did.

Group Review Discussion Questions

[After reading the text of this bookito, answer the following questions in a discussion group with others.]

1. What do you suppose were Peter's personal feelings behind his desire that Jesus not go to Jerusalem?
2. Why is it difficult to ignore Jesus, regardless of what the world thinks of Him or ourselves being His disciple?
3. Why are legalistic performances of religious traditions or ceremonies weak in making us feel spiritually satisfied in our relationship with God?
4. What is the most difficult thing to comprehend concerning the incarnation of the Son of God?
5. What are some of the humiliating experiences through which Jesus had to go in order to go to the cross?
6. What are the most common obstacles we must overcome in order to identify with Jesus in His incarnation?
7. What are the most common things that lead us away from living the mind of Christ?
8. Why is the incarnation more about Jesus, and the cross about us?
9. Why does our focus on the cross encourage us to endure through the trials of this world?
10. Why does our focus on the cross aid in the transformation of our behavior?

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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