WONDERFUL COUNSELOR:
HOW A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST HELPS BELIEVERS DRAW NEAR TO THEIR SAVIOR

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APPROVAL SHEET

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR:
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"It is a mercy to have a faithful friend that loveth you entirely . . . to have so near a friend to be a helper to your soul and . . . to stir up in you the grace of God." – Richard Baxter.

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Nina, my fellow heir in the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7). She has challenged me, advised me, encouraged me, and put up with me for the length of this project and far beyond. She has also raised with me three beautiful girls, Gracie, Gaby, and Katy. My constant prayer for you all is that Christ will always be more precious than anything this world has to offer. May Christ and his glory always be our goal, passion, and holy obsession as we walk with him and grow in likeness to him.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
LXX	Septuagint
NASBU	New American Standard Update 1995

PREFACE

When I consider all the influential people who have encouraged, aided, and inspired me both in my personal pursuit of Christ as well as in writing a thesis designed to help others pursue Christ, I am overwhelmed with gratitude toward God and so many who have poured their lives into my own and helped me along the way both in ministry and in the Christian life. I am so grateful for parents, Jim and Jimmie Ann, who loved me, whose marriage was a model of Christ's love for the church, and who always supported the call of God on my life though it led me and their precious daughter-in-law and granddaughters far from them. Of course, my ever supportive and encouraging in-laws, Gene and Dina Comaduran, have carried that missionary parent burden with much grace and patience as well.

It is impossible to list all the pastors, professors, and elders who have influenced my life and helped form me. However, I am especially grateful for my pastor, John MacArthur, for his relentless pursuit of the truth, his faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, and his Christ-exalting preaching that has served as an example to a generation of preachers. I am also indebted to the elders of Grace Community Church, who sent us to Croatia twenty years ago and have patiently and graciously shepherded us through many joys and challenges in ministry.

I have the distinct privilege of working with a wonderful group of men in the faculty of the Theological Biblical Academy (TBA) in Croatia. I am so thankful for their impact in my life and their example to me as we train pastors, church planters, and church leaders in the former Yugoslavia. I am also thankful for all my colleagues in The Master's Academy International and the Grace Community Church missionary family. I

cannot imagine a more esteemed group of servants with whom to work alongside in the endeavor of serving the global bride of Christ.

I am thankful for the students of TBA past and present as well as the precious members of Baptist Church Emanuel in Krapina. Serving you all in the role of professor and pastor has been an honor to me which I could never deserve. In addition, there are so many pastors and dear brothers and sisters in our supporting churches who have held the ropes, prayed for us, refreshed us along the way, and amply supplied our needs through the years that I feel that I am the most blessed man on the face of the earth.

I also thank my supervisor for this project, Stuart Scott, who was also pastoring my adult Sunday School class twenty years ago when my wife and I left for Croatia. Thank you for your insight, input, encouragement in this project, but also your humble example as a servant of Christ. Professors Jeremy Pierre, Robert Jones, and Joe Harrod as well as my fellow SBTS classmates all enriched my life and understanding through the lectures and discussions of how to help others grow and develop in Christlikeness as we do so ourselves.

Special acknowledgement must be made to Doug Bookman, whose lectures on the life of Christ and enthusiasm for the importance and practicality of the subject excited my heart and propelled me into this area of study and research. Thank you for coming to Croatia in 2012 to teach this material, thank you for your years of faithful teaching, and thank you for your passion concerning the humanity of our Savior.

I also must thank again my precious wife, Nina, whose influence is found all throughout the pages of this work. She challenged my thinking and helped me clarify many ideas. She has also been a patient encourager and true help-mate. She, along with our three wonderful girls, Gracie, Gaby, and Katy, have been a great support in my studies that required many extra hours work as well as international travel.

During lunch after Dr. Bookman's lectures in 2012, my brilliant and insightful wife posed a question to Dr. Bookman: "In all your years of studying the life of Christ,

what one thing stands out above all else?" Dr. Bookman responded, "We tend to emphasize the deity of Christ in our thinking at the expense of his humanity." That question and answer stimulated the ideas, the many hours of study and thought, and numerous conversations that led to this thesis. Its influence can be seen throughout.

I am so grateful to all of you and many more whom I have not mentioned. May the glory of Christ be our constant preoccupation and incentive to conformity to his character.

James Kristian Brackett

Krapina, Croatia
December 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The leaders and shapers of the biblical counseling movement unanimously agree that effective biblical counseling aims to help the counselee become more like the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.[1] However, these same leaders and shapers often lack significant discussions in their writings related to one of the most important doctrines concerning the Savior.[2] This doctrine, when rightly understood, aids the believer in drawing closer to Jesus in deeper fellowship and intimacy. Already in the pages of Scripture this doctrine receives emphasis. It also received careful attention in the early centuries of the Christian church. Nevertheless, today's preachers often neglect this essential truth, and subsequently many Christians misunderstand it. This doctrine is the humanity of Christ.

Regardless of the problems they might face, counselees need help to become like Christ. This process involves looking to him in faith, beholding his glory, and then

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[1]This goal is seen, for instance, in Rom 8:28-30; 2 Cor 3:18; and Eph 4:15-16. See Bob Kellemen and Kevin Carson, eds., *Biblical Counseling and the Church: God's Care through God's People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2015), locs. 1469, 6655, 6678, Kindle; James MacDonald, Bob Kelleman, and Steve Viars, eds., *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 13, 48, 182; Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 101; John F. MacArthur, Jr., Wayne A. Mack, and the Master's College Faculty, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), 146, 302, Logos; and Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 48, 238, 264, Kindle.

[2]Jay Adams's *Theology of Christian Counseling,* for instance, lacks any chapter specifically devoted to Christology. While authors often comment on Christlikeness as the goal of counseling, comments on Christ tend to focus on a bare statement that Christ can sympathize with sinners, but there is no significant discussion on the depth or breadth of his sympathy (for instance, see Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 111). Other comments on Christ often revolve around his balance of public and private ministry and his methodology of data gathering (for instance, see Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 165-67).

growing in a personal relationship with him through constant prayer and regular study of the Word. Paul emphasizes the necessity of beholding the glory of Christ in the process of being transformed into his image in 2 Corinthians 3:18 when he states, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."[3] Unfortunately, many believers remain at a distance from the Wonderful Counselor,[4] failing to draw near to him and experience many of the blessings of salvation. One cause for this failure is that Christians do not think carefully about the humanity of Christ and the implications of this wonderful, but often ignored, aspect of his life. This thesis by no means proposes a new methodology of biblical counseling; rather, it seeks to show the necessity and benefit of exposing believers to the practical implications of Jesus' humanity.

The goal in biblical counseling is to help a counselee become independently dependent on Jesus Christ.[5] This dependence consists of walking with Christ with the aid of Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and service in the local body, as well as the practice of other Christian disciplines. Nevertheless, a survey of the writings of many leaders of the biblical counseling movement reveals that the doctrine of Christ, and more specifically

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[3]Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations will be from the English Standard Version.

[4]This title of the Savior comes from the prophecy of the birth of the Messiah in Isa 9:6. Although some interpreters such as Franz Delitzsch (*Isaiah,* Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 7 [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969], 163, Logos) suggest that "Wonderful" and "Counselor" are two separate names, most interpreters believe on the basis of parallelism with the other titles in Isa 9:6 that "Wonderful Counselor" should stand together. See Gary Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 240, Logos; and Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 81, Logos. Regardless of the exegesis of the Isa 9 prophecy, the title "Wonderful Counselor" has become a common reference to the Savior as the Counselor *par excellence*. For instance, see Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 95; Craig Brian Larson, "Epilogue," in *Mastering Pastoral Counseling*, Mastering Ministry (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992), 172, Logos; or John F. MacArthur Jr., "The Psychological Epidemic and Its Cure," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 1 (1991): 18, Logos.

[5]Rather than depending on the counselor-counselee relationship, counselees can at times become overly dependent on the counselor(s) and fail to draw near to their Savior. Any Christian can face this temptation by becoming excessively reliant on a favorite preacher, a friend, program, or small-group. While the body of Christ is naturally interrelated and interdependent, each individual believer must be vitally attached to the Savior as the branch is to the vine for spiritual life and growth (John 15). "Independently dependent" then means that believers are progressing toward taking responsibility for their own walk with Christ and serving others in the body.

the humanity of Jesus Christ, receives little attention. Certainly, this oversight is unintentional considering how much emphasis is placed on growing in Christlikeness.

Through twenty years of pastoral and theological educational ministry, primarily in Europe, I have found that many believers both overseas and in the States, including many students and pastors, lack a developed understanding of the humanity of Christ and are confused as to the relationship between Christ's humanity and his earthly ministry.[6] These believers clearly affirm that Jesus did not regard his divine nature and attributes as something to be used for his own benefit rather "emptied himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of God" (Phil 2:6-7). Furthermore, they recognize the fact that he was made "like his brothers in every respect" (Heb 2:17). Nevertheless, many believers fail to apply this knowledge consistently to their reading of the Gospels. This confusion and inconsistency can be observed in both popular and expositional commentaries that tend to attribute omniscience, omnipotence, and other divine attributes to Jesus' human nature. In other words, many preachers and commentators give the impression that Jesus shifted back and forth between full use of his divine attributes and his human attributes as needed when he was on this earth. Bruce Ware refers to this tendency to assume that Jesus freely performed miracles, resisted temptation, and perfectly obey the Father out of the resources of his divine nature and power as evangelical intuition or instinct.[7] As a result, Christians may implicitly assume that Jesus' life was less than fully human.

For example, in Gospel passages that describe Jesus having supernatural insight into the hearts of man or when he gave specific instructions to the disciples about

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[6]This observation has been confirmed in numerous conversations with colleagues and peers in pastoral ministry and educational ministry, as well as with several lecturers who have done extensive study and teaching on the life of Christ.

[7]See Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), locs. 414, 425, 706, Kindle. See also Brian S. Borgman, *Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 149, Kindle.

coming events, many commentators leave the impression that Jesus simply accessed his omniscience or omnipotence when necessary.[8] Confusion at this point can lead a Christian to conclude that the Savior had advantages that he did not, in fact, use when he walked on the earth. Bruce Ware offers a thoughtful solution to this dilemma when he contends that Jesus walked as a man in this world and depended on the Spirit of God on a daily basis.[9] Understanding this truth, along with other facets and implications of the humanity of Christ, will help any believer, struggling or prospering, grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Appreciation of his ability to sympathize grows when believers understand more clearly the limits the Savior voluntarily accepted in the incarnation.

In summary, similarity to Christ comes by knowing Christ by beholding his glory and abiding in him. One aspect of his glory that believers often do not see clearly is his humanity. Believers who see that he is like them in every respect and that he truly sympathizes with their weaknesses while remaining without sin will more readily seek his help when they are tempted (Heb 2:17-18). Likewise, they will more readily draw near to his throne of grace (Heb 4:15-16). Weary and burdened believers who trust the Savior and are convinced that he is a true and abundantly capable brother will more regularly respond to his invitation to come to him for rest and relief (Matt 11:28-30). Appreciation leads to familiarity which in turn breeds similarity and maturity. Ultimately,

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[8]A few examples among many that are available should suffice. Kent Hughes states concerning Jesus' interaction with Nathanael in John 1:47, "Here Jesus unveiled his omniscience to Nathanael." R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 27, Logos. Concerning Jesus' instructions to his disciples to go and get a donkey upon which he could enter Jerusalem (Matt 21:1-2), Matthew Henry writes, "We have an instance of Christ's knowledge. . . . His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed." Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1719, Logos. R. C. H. Lenski commenting on the parallel passage in Mark 11:1-3 suggests, "The explicit orders of Jesus to his disciples reveal his supernatural knowledge, of which, like his other divine powers, he makes such use as his great work requires." R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 476, Logos.

[9]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 436.

the believer moves further toward Christlikeness.

Familiarity with the Literature

A survey of works on biblical counseling will show that leaders of this movement agree that a growing Christlikeness is the purpose or desired outcome of counseling. However, few of these works devote more than a few comments or possibly a chapter on the person of Christ himself. Naturally, systematic and biblical theologies contain chapters devoted to Christology. While many of these volumes discuss the importance and implications of the incarnation, discussion of practical application specifically in the realm of pastoral theology is limited. A growing number of more recent volumes on the humanity of Christ proves helpful in considering the practical applications of this doctrine, but they, likewise, lack any significant discussion on specific applications to biblical counseling.

Introductions and Handbooks of Biblical Counseling

In the landmark volume *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More than Redemption*—a book that laid the foundation for biblical counseling from the beginning of the movement—Jay Adams outlines various divisions of systematic theology and applies them to the work of counseling and pastoral ministry. At the time, Adams found that pastors typically referred their church members to professionals and deferred to their therapy. They made these referrals despite the fact that these therapists often denied the sufficiency of the Scripture, failed to define sin biblically, and unashamedly integrated biblical counsel with the principles of secularists and atheists like Freud, Rogers, and Skinner. Adams's systematic approach demonstrates that the various divisions of theology all speak to the process of change and growth in Jesus Christ.

Though Adams's book lacks a section specifically devoted to Christology, in his discussion of the Trinity, he describes how the transcendence of God is balanced by

the immanence of the Holy Spirit and adds that "the majestic otherness of His deity . . . is conditioned by the humanness of Jesus Christ."[10] Upon quoting Hebrews 4:14-16, he applies this doctrine commenting that help is readily available to the Christian counselee because Christ, by virtue of his human nature and life in the flesh, understands all problems and challenges from man's perspective. In fact, he can sympathize with sinners because he came as a man and was tempted without sinning. He offers genuine help to the struggling believer despite the often-repeated assertion that he cannot sympathize with sinners since he never sinned himself.[11] This brief treatment invites further elucidation and application. If the goal of biblical counseling is to become like Christ, then counselees should earnestly desire to walk with Christ. This thesis will demonstrate how understanding the humanness of Jesus more clearly will motivate any believer to walk closer with him.[12]

Though more often known for his promotion and relentless pursuit of clear expository preaching, John MacArthur, author and well-known pastor of Grace Community Church, marshals a capable team to produce a very helpful handbook that lays the foundation and outlines the methodology of biblical counseling in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: A Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling*.

This volume comes to the aid of expository preachers who might be overwhelmed, intimidated, or unprepared for the ministry of counseling. It is also suitable for any church leader or lay person who wants to grow in their understanding of the ministry of biblical counseling as well as the ministry of discipleship in the church. Like

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[10]Adams, *Theology of Christian Counseling*, 55.

[11]Adams, *Theology of Christian Counseling*, 56.

[12]Heath Lambert, in his recently published *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*, devotes several pages to the humanity of Christ and the implications of the two natures of Christ in one man. Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2016), 140-45, Kindle. However, Lambert's comments are limited to the statement of Jesus' humanity and two natures and a few implications without significant application to the common problems of man.

many of the handbooks or introductions available the general topics addressed include the historical background, the theological foundations, and the process and practice of biblical counseling. Specific doctrines such as Christology do not receive much treatment.

In *Seeing with New Eyes* David Powlison endeavors to provide his readers with a new perspective much like an optometrist would fit a patient with a new pair of glasses. In this volume focused on the theoretical foundations of biblical counseling, Powlison challenges his readers to see the Scriptures with a new, more application-oriented perspective. Further, he provokes their thoughts on various issues that face modern man as well as trends within biblical counseling.

At the outset, Powlison explains that he will first endeavor to help his reader to understand Scripture and secondly to understand people and their problems.[13] With various expositions from the epistle to the Ephesians, the Psalms, and the Gospel of Luke, he addresses topics such as counseling from the Scriptures, the believer's view of God, relationships, anxiety, pain, and worry. Powlison intends to excite his readers by casting new light on these passages and to demonstrate their relevance and impact on the daily lives of struggling sinners.

In the second section of *Seeing with New Eyes*, Powlison analyzes and interprets human nature and the accompanying motivations that lead people to think, act, and react as they do. In the various chapters he deals with various topics related to the question of motivation, intentions, desires, parental relationships, defense mechanisms, and feelings. Just as Powlison endeavored to help readers see counseling with new eyes, this thesis endeavors to cast new light, clearer light on a neglected aspect of the Savior so that counselors and counselees will see that Jesus truly is the true friend of sinners.

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[13]David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2011), 11, Kindle.

In *How People Change* Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp address one of the most basic questions of the Christian life. The authors lead readers through the desert and ultimately to still waters where they can grow in similitude to Christ and help others to do the same. They endeavor to help believers bridge the gap between the theology that they profess and the world where they struggle to live out their daily lives. In order to do so, they use the metaphors of heat, thorns, cross, and fruit to equip believers to connect their faith to the challenges of life.

In chapter 9 of their book, addressing the thorns of life—life's challenges and difficulties—they discuss Hebrews 4:14-5:10. They briefly point out that the passage teaches that Christ enters into human struggles having already been there himself. Since he has faced all temptations, he understands the believers' struggles. Furthermore, he will help. He will be with his people. He will give them the mercy and grace that they need.[14] Much more can and should be said concerning this key passage along with Hebrews 2:14-18 concerning the solidarity believers have with their High Priest, and what kind of resource this solidarity can be for the struggling believer.

In their introduction to the volume *Biblical Counseling and the Church* (2015), editors Bob Kelleman and Kevin Carson draw from Ephesians 4:15 to define purpose of biblical counseling. They quote this verse and then assert, "Those twenty-one words capture Christ's calling for His people. And what ministry is every pastor to equip every Christian to perform? The ministry of biblical counseling: speaking and embodying gospel truth in love so we all grow up in Christ."[15] In addition, the Biblical Counseling Coalition Confessional Statement located in the first appendix of this volume states unequivocally, "We point to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory,

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[14]Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 136, Kindle.

[15]Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, loc. 247. See also Brad Bigney and Ken Long, "Tools to Grow Your Church: Uniting Biblical Counseling and Small Groups," in Kellemen and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, loc. 1469.

or experience. . . . People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization."[16] A few pages later the statement asserts, "The aim of wise counseling is intentional and intensive discipleship. The fruit of wise counseling is spiritually mature people who increasingly reflect Christ."[17] This book like many on biblical counseling emphasizes the goal of Christlikeness—a goal enhanced through understanding the depth of the Savior's empathy for sinners.

Much the way Richard Baxter's (1615–1691) *The Reformed Pastor* set the standard for pastoral soul-care, Paul Tripp's *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* set the standard for creating an atmosphere and equipping the saints to care for souls at the one-another level. His subtitle, *People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*, outlines the thesis that God calls every believer to counsel, disciple, and take responsibility for the growth of their brothers and sisters. All saints have this joyful obligation despite their own need of growth. Tripp's "Love-Know-Speak-Do" model of ministry covers the process from relationship, to intimate fellowship, to truth-speaking, to implementation of truth. Rather than just a formal ministry model, though, Tripp proposes that this paradigm summarizes God's expectation for every believer whether involved in formal counseling or informal conversations with other believers on the path to Christlikeness.

In chapter 6, "Following the Wonderful Counselor," Tripp reminds his readers that the Savior is at the center of the process of change. He states, "In confronting people with truth, we confront them with Christ. This is quite radical, for it says that truth, in its most basic form, is not a system, a theology, or a philosophy. It is a *person* whose name

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[16]Kelleman and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, loc. 6655.

[17]Kelleman and Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church*, loc. 6678.

is Jesus. Living a godly life means trusting him, following him, and living like him."[18] Later Tripp suggests that Jesus serves as a model for 'knowing intimately' and even entering into the world of a fellow believer.[19] Primarily, Tripp draws from Jesus' example lessons that can be learned for the purpose of data gathering.[20]

Monographs

One book that has certainly influenced this thesis concerning the humanity of Christ is Bruce Ware's *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ.* This book constitutes Ware's response to the neglect of the doctrine of the humanity of Christ while evangelicals have focused energy on the defense of Jesus' deity. He recounts his own struggle with this doctrine and the impression that Jesus could not truly sympathize with his struggles against sin if he could not sin. However, his study of the Scripture reveals that not only did Jesus truly experience temptation, he also had to grow in wisdom and lived in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit as he walked on this earth. The fact that Jesus is fully God does not annul his own struggles and temptations as man.

Ware addresses meaning and implications in the *kenosis* passage, Philippians 2:5-8, acknowledging that clearly "some qualities of his eternal, divine nature are simply incompatible with his true and genuine human nature."[21] Though being equal to God, Jesus emptied himself. Ware emphasizes that this phrase cannot mean that Jesus ceased being equal to God. Instead, "he did not grasp or clutch onto the privileged position,

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[18]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands,* 101.

[19]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands,* 111.

[20]Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands,* 165-67. See also MacDonald, Kellemen, and Viars, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, 34, 43-45, and 313. These pages attest to the fact that Jesus Christ sympathizes with believers as well as provides an example of effective counseling in his interaction with the Samaritan woman.

[21]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 171.

rights, and prerogatives that his full equality with God, his Father afforded him."[22] Rather than becoming less than God, Jesus emptied himself by taking on or adding to himself the nature of man.[23]

For the remainder of his book, Ware investigates and applies this 'emptying by addition' to other aspects of Jesus' life. He considers Jesus' dependence on the Spirit in his daily life and ministry as well as his growth and development from an infant to a grown man. He devotes one chapter to the difficult statement of Hebrews 5:8-9, "Although He was a Son, he learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Further chapters address important questions such as the legitimacy of Jesus' temptations, the significance of Jesus being male, the necessity of a human being to die in place of humans, and the implications of the bodily resurrection, reign and return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This book truly challenges the reader to think clearly and apply carefully the doctrine of the humanity of Christ.

Patrick Henry Reardon, pastor of All Saints Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago, has written a thoughtful volume on the humanity of Christ in *The Jesus We Missed: The Surprising Truth about the Humanity of Christ.*[24] Many of the thoughts he expresses confirm ideas that form this thesis. Addressing the nature of Jesus' self-limitation and the validity of his temptations, he writes, "Jesus is no invulnerable, unthreatened superman. What authority (*exsousia*) and power (*dynamis*) he has as Son of God is for the benefit of other people. He will not cash in for personal advantage."[25] He points out that the brevity of the accounts of the temptations might lead readers to dismiss

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[22]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 217.

[23]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 229.

[24]Patrick Henry Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed: The Surprising Truth about the Humanity of Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), Kindle.

[25]Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed*, 51.

the intensity of the lure. Reardon insists, "They really *were* temptations. That is to say, Jesus really *was* hungry; Jesus really *did* feel the attraction of worldly power. He *was* tempted, insists the New Testament, 'as we are' (Heb 4:15)."[26]

Rather than claiming that Jesus simply accessed or leveraged his deity as needed, Reardon suggests that in those instances where Jesus anticipated future events, he had prophetic insight through the revelation of the Holy Spirit just as the Old Testament prophets before him. In those time where he had insight into the thoughts of people, supernatural knowledge was not necessary. Instead, Jesus exercised an unusual spiritual sensitivity and discernment with the Holy Spirit's guidance and aid.[27] Reardon does not diminish the deity of Jesus Christ with these proposals. Instead, he suggests a more consistent application Philippians 2:7. He also demonstrates that Jesus in adding humanity to his deity he truly became like his brothers in all things (Heb 2:17) and being beset with weakness himself (Heb 5:2), he truly sympathizes with sinners in need of grace. (Heb 4:15-16).

The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus,[28] Gerald Hawthorne's systematic study of the role of the Holy Spirit in the human life of Christ, sheds light on a topic that is often overlooked. Nevertheless, this helpful survey provides insight into the human life of Jesus Christ and the resources than he depended on during his sojourn on this earth.

In the course of writing this thesis, Crossway published Stephen Wellum's volume devoted to the topic of Christology, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of*

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[26]Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed*, 55.

[27]Reardon, *The Jesus We Missed*, 82, 85.

[28]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus (*Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991).

Christ.[29] This comprehensive survey of the biblical data concerning Christ, the historical development of the doctrine of Christ, as well as the critiques of more contemporary interpretations of the person of Christ is mandatory reading for anyone wanting to broaden and deepen their understanding of the issues concerning Christology. Finally, Donald MacLeod[30] and Oliver Crisp[31] both provide lucid and accessible treatments of Christology for those seeking a deeper discussion than found in the typical systematic theology.

Systematic Theologies

Systematic theologies tend to be helpful regarding the question of the humanity of Christ as they are forced to deal with this doctrine under the rubric of Christology. However, not all systematic theologies are equally helpful in casting light on the implications of this doctrine for counseling. Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* stands among the more insightful. He addresses the virgin birth of the Savior offering three reasons why it was necessary. He considers the human limitations of Jesus pointing out that those who knew him during his time on the earth assumed that he was a man far more often than they affirmed his deity.[32] He also addresses the impeccability of Christ and offers seven reasons why the Son of God had to become a man including so that he could be our example and so that he could sympathize as our high priest.[33]

Millard Erikson's *Christian Theology* also affirms, as Ware does, that close

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[29]Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, ed. John S. Feinberg, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

[30]Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998).

[31]Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[32]Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 534, Logos.

[33]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 540-42.

and extensive discussion has not focused on the humanity of Christ due to the dispute between liberals and fundamentalists over his deity.[34] Among his own list of implications, Erickson includes that Jesus can both genuinely sympathize and intercede for us having experience the full range of human experience. Anything the believer might experience, Christ has undergone it himself. He further adds concerning Jesus: "He is not some celestial superstar, but one who has lived where we live. We can therefore look to him as a model of the Christian life. The biblical standards for human behavior, which seem to us to be so hard to attain, are seen in him to be within human possibility. Of course, there must be full dependence upon the grace of God."[35] Though brief, Erickson at least provides some thought provoking ideas.

Most theologians naturally focus on the suffering and the vicarious atoning death of Jesus Christ. Even in their chapters on the humanity of Christ, rarely do they address the sufferings of the Savior prior to the passion week. Louis Berkhof, however, points out that the Savior suffered during his entire life, suffered both in body and soul, suffered in a variety of ways, suffered uniquely, and suffered with temptations.[36] While most believers would not deem to think that their own sufferings could compare with the hours between the garden and the grave, they can take great solace that their own daily sufferings mirror in many ways the daily sufferings of the Savior who was in fact "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3).

Void in the Literature

As the biblical counseling movement continues to grow and develop, many great resources are being produced to help churches cultivate among their members those

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[34]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 705-6.

[35]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 721.

[36]Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 336-38, Logos.

who are equipped to minister to others. The Biblical Counseling Coalition has committed itself to this purpose stating in its vision statement, "We are dedicated to developing the theology and practice of the personal ministry of the Word, whether described as biblical counseling, personal discipleship, one-another ministry, small group ministry, the cure of soul, soul care, spiritual friendship or spiritual direction."[37] Numerous introductions and handbooks have been published since 1970 when Jay Adams published *Competent to Counsel* and sounded the call for a return to the Scriptures as the primary source of help and guidance for salvation, sanctification, and dealing with the problems of sin.[38]

Despite the growing number of excellent resources that outline the foundation and practice of biblical counseling, very few of these introductions dedicate more than a few pages to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. As previously mentioned, most texts or handbooks on biblical counseling will describe the goal of biblical counseling as helping the counselee to become more like Christ. Also, authors will mention Christ's private ministry and personal methods in these resources. In a number of works, authors acknowledge and may discuss in a few paragraphs the fact that Jesus was "made like his brothers in every respect" (Heb 2:17) and that he "in every has been tempted as we are" (Heb 4:17). However, these important facts about Jesus' humanity remain underdeveloped. Though the Gospel writers provide many examples of Jesus facing the problems that are common to contemporary man, whether it is injustice, financial instability, or betrayal by friends, these case studies receive little attention.

While more and more resources are produced dealing with specific issues in counseling from anxiety to anger, from depression to drug addiction, from dealing with one's past to dealing with one's perfectionism, from heart idols to hard cases, and many, many more, little has been written concerning the person of Christ as he relates to biblical

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[37]MacDonald, Kellemen and Viars, *Christ-Centered Counseling*, 427.

[38]Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986).

counseling. Michael Reeves's commentary on Christianity, in general, is direct and applicable. He writes, "We naturally gravitate, it seems, toward *anything* but Jesus—and Christians almost as much as anyone—whether it's 'the Christian worldview,' 'grace,' 'the Bible,' or 'the gospel,' as if they were things *in themselves* that could save us. Even 'the cross' can get abstracted from Jesus, as if the wood had some power of its own."[39] Despite so much "biblical" counseling, or "gospel-" or "cross-" or even "Christ-centered" counseling material, followers of Jesus Christ often forget to point people to Jesus Christ himself. Reeves continues, "The center, the cornerstone, the jewel in the crown of Christianity is not an idea, a system or a thing; it is not even 'the gospel' as such. It is Jesus Christ."[40] Specifically, the humanity of Christ as it relates to our problems and his ability to help us lacks significant exposition.[41]

Thesis

Believers who fail to apply passages like Philippians 2:5-11 and Hebrews 2:14-18 or 4:15-16 to their reading of the Gospels will not clearly see the full glory of Christ in his humanity. Subsequently the process of transformation in to the image of Christ may be unnecessarily impeded. Focusing on Jesus' deity at the expense of his humanity, the followers of Jesus may conclude that Jesus' temptations were not real and that he does not truly understand their problems. As a result, they remain at a distance and even estranged from him. The consequence in biblical counseling could even be that counselees seek a substitute for the Savior in the counselor or that counselees lose hope,

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[39]Michael Reeves, *Rejoicing in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 9, Kindle.

[40]Reeves, *Rejoicing in Christ,*10.

[41]Some systematic theologians such as Grudem and Erickson briefly touch on why Christ had to become man and even delve into the implications of his humanity; however, most theologians necessarily focus on the development of Christology, the human and divine nature of Christ, and issues such as the impeccability of Christ. Likewise, commentaries are not of great help, understandably, since they do cannot devote much space to development of the theology of the passages, but rather focus on the explanation of grammar and syntax. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for commentaries reinforce the idea that Christ accessed his divine attributes as needed without any seeming consideration of Phil 2:5-8.

not making progress along the path toward transformation into Christlikeness.

In order to grow in Christ and Christlikeness, believers must first look upon him and then regularly behold his glory.[42] This transformative gaze must take all of Jesus into view, including both his deity and humanity. As Mark Jones has stated, "His life has a glory in it that is only appreciated to the degree that his true humanity is embraced and understood."[43] As believers see the glory of Jesus in his condescension and humility to become fully man, while still remaining fully God, they will gain appreciation of their Lord as a dear friend, able counselor, and sympathetic high priest. This process draws them into a closer walk and more intimate relationship with him.

This thesis will investigate the implications of the humanity of Jesus Christ and its relationship to biblical counseling. First, three key passages that describe the humanity of Christ will be mined for clearer understanding of this doctrine. Second, an overview of the development of the doctrine of Christ in the early church as well as key elements in this doctrine and clarifications by various theologians will provide a solid theological foundation of this important truth. Finally, this doctrine will be applied to several examples of the "common to man" problems and temptations that Jesus faced in order to demonstrate its effectiveness. Understanding and meditation on this truth will help the counselee draw near to Jesus and live independently dependent on him. Leaning on the promises of God and being led by the Spirit of God, Jesus was tempted as every other man, and yet he never sinned. Because he became man, he indeed is the friend of sinners and the Wonderful Counselor. This truth should instill strength, hope, and confidence in any struggling believer.

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[42]Cf. Matt 11:28-30; 2 Cor 3:18; John 1:14, and 1 John 3:2 which gives believers the ultimate assurance that the process of beholding and transforming into the image of Christ will be eventually completed.

[43]Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 51.

CHAPTER 2

THE EXEGETICAL BASIS FOR THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST FROM THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS AND TO THE PHILIPPIANS

While the Gospels describe how the humanity of Christ works out in his daily life, the epistles give insight into the reasons, implications, and, to some degree, the manner of Jesus' incarnation. The Gospel writers draw attention to Jesus' full identity with mankind whether it is the experience of thirst (John 4:7), tiredness (Matt 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), or growing in knowledge and wisdom throughout his childhood (Luke 2:52). However, the epistles develop the significance of his incarnation for humankind.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states the fact and extent of the humanity of Christ emphasizing how it qualifies Jesus to be the great high priest. He addresses this subject initially in chapter 2 and continues to develop it in chapters 4 and 5. A special focus on 2:14-18 and 4:15-5:10 will provide multiple statements of the humanity of Christ as well as the implications of this comprehensive identity with humankind. If his humanity is mitigated or undervalued in any way, then his role as high priest is compromised.

Paul, in Philippians 2:5-11, addresses both the incarnation and the exaltation of Jesus in one of the most thoroughly examined and debated passages in the New Testament. He states the fact of the incarnation with an emphasis on how the eternal Son of God became man. The incarnation for Paul demonstrates a concrete example of the humility and voluntary condescension of the Savior. Furthermore, the Savior provides a model for all believers to follow.

These three passages will help form a proper understanding of the humanity of

Christ. This understanding enhances the sanctification process. Paul describes the ultimate goal of the sanctification process as being conformed to Christ (Rom 8:28-29). A key means toward attaining that goal is gazing at the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18). As stated earlier, the believer must see the full glory of the Lord in order to be transformed into his image. That transformative gaze must take in both the humanity and the deity of Christ. Therefore, believers must take care that they understand and appreciate the humanity of Christ.

George Guthrie suggests that to the unconscious tendency to discount the humanity of Christ is a new form of an old heresy. He writes, "If we are careless in our thinking about Jesus, we can slip into a form of Neoapollinarianism, embracing his divinity but holding his humanity at arm's length."[1] Modern readers of the Gospels, reading about Jesus' life without balanced understanding of his humanity and deity, will undermine their own spiritual growth. If Jesus regularly exercised his divine attributes for his own benefit, a resource that lies outside the reach of believers, potentially leads to the conclusion that Jesus was functionally more divine than human. As a result, believers might unconsciously dismiss his ability to identify with them. Christians will not be compelled to draw near to a loving, understanding, empathetic, and sympathetic Savior and King. Since seeing the full glory of Christ aids the process of sanctification, counselors must help their counselees to read Scriptures effectively and properly understand the humanity of Christ and its implications.

Hebrews 2:14-18: The Great High Priest Introduced

The author of the book of Hebrews wrote to a primarily Jewish audience[2]

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[1]George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 118.

[2]Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 20, Logos. Cockerill points out that the designation "Jewish" is in the religious sense and not in the ethical sense so that Gentiles who were former Jewish proselytes but had converted to Christianity would also be included in this category. For evidence that the audience was primarily made up of Hellenistic Jews who had converted to

facing persecution and tremendous community pressure to abandon their commitment to Christ and return to traditional Judaism.[3] The author repeatedly encourages them to hold fast their confession to the Lord Jesus Christ.[4] The recipients faced various trials and pressures including the temptation to become lax in their pursuit of Christ-like maturity, the temptation to give up all together and return to their former life of sin and unbelief, and the temptation to succumb to the external challenges that included persecution, prison, and poverty as a result of their Christian commitment.[5] The author, through his pastoral writing, attempts to encourage, support, and build up the saints in this church that is both isolated and losing members to apostasy and incarceration.[6] Facing daunting sustained persecution, the believers needed to be strengthened in their faith to continue to hold fast to Christ and to believe the promises of God.[7] The author repeatedly warns of the dire consequences of abandoning their Lord (2:1-4, 3:7-14, 5:11-6:20, 10:26-39, 12:15-17, and 12:25-29). The author weaves with these warnings a detailed argument for the superiority of Christ. He demonstrates that Jesus surpasses the written Old Testament revelation as God's final word (Heb 1:1-4). He also exceeds both in excellence and in

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Christ, see William Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, The Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Dallas: Word, 1998), liv-lv, Logos. See also Leon Morris, *The Lord from Heaven* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), 83-84. Morris comments that clever, contemporary ideas that the epistle is primarily written to Gentiles have proven ingenious, but unconvincing.

[3]Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 22-27, Logos.

[4]See, for example, Heb 3:6,14; 4:14; 10:23.

[5]Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 78-79; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 12-13, Logos. The author acknowledges with regard to O'Brien's commentary on Hebrews that William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company released a statement on August 15, 2016 revealing that this commentary falls short of accepted standards of documentation and citing secondary standards. That statement includes O'Brien's acknowledgment and apology. Despite this development, the author still considers O'Brien's work very helpful, though somewhat tainted.

[6]Apparently some believers had already been thrown into jail and suffered the seizure of their property for their love of the Savior (Heb 10:34).

[7]Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, c (introduction, 100).

perfection angels (Heb 1:5-14), Moses (Heb 3:1-6), and the priesthoods of Aaron and Levi (Heb 7). Preoccupied with superiority of Jesus, the author labors to convince his readers that despite their suffering, they dare not capitulate to the pressure they face and abandon their Lord.

The humanity of Christ is a predominant theme in this Christocentric epistle. The author introduces this theme as it relates to his role as the perfect high priest. Describing Christ's condescension to become man in a variety of ways, the author implies that if the humanity of Christ is mitigated in any way, then his role as the superior high priest suffers irreparable damage.

Descriptions of the Incarnation in Hebrews 2:14-18

The author gives four clear descriptions of the humanity of Christ in Hebrews 2:14-18.[8] First, he states in verse fourteen, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things." Having explained a few verses earlier that Jesus surpasses other supernatural beings even though he was "made for a little while lower than the angels" (Heb 2:9), the author affirms that Jesus partook of the same "flesh and blood"[9] as "the children," referring to mankind. The author explicitly expresses the distinction between Jesus and other humans while also emphasizing the great similarity in two specific ways.

First, he uses the verb "share" in description of the children of mankind.

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[8]While there are many issues and truths in the addressed passages, due to the nature of this thesis and the limitations in length only those statements directly related to the humanity of Christ will be examined.

[9]This idiom is translated as "flesh and blood" (NASBU, ESV, NET, NIV, NKJV) even though the original contains "blood and flesh," maintaining the consistent biblical emphasis reaching back to the Old Testament law on the importance of the blood as being the life of the flesh (see Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11,14). The nouns "blood and flesh" as well as the pronoun translated "same things" are all in the genitive. Daniel Wallace incudes "verbs of sharing or partaking and verbs with a partitive genitive idea" are among those that typically take the genitive object. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1996), 131, Logos.

Everyone from Adam until the current day has and continues to share in flesh and blood.[10] Mankind from his creation has had the same physical nature and human condition in common. For Jesus, the author uses a different verb thereby making a precise distinction. He "partook"[11] of the same flesh and blood nature. Though the verbs overlap in meaning, the difference in forms implies the pre-existence of the Son of God. As William Lane explains, both verbs describe "full participation in a shared reality" while "distinction lies in the variation of the verbal tenses. The perfect tense of κεκοινώνηκεν, 'share,' marks the 'original and natural' state of humanity, while the aorist tense of μετέσχεν, 'shared,' emphasizes that the Son assumed human nature."[12] With his selection of verbs and forms the author emphasizes both solidarity and distinction.

Additionally, the writer of the epistle combines an emphatic conjunction with an emphatic pronoun and an adverb in order to stress the degree of solidarity. This syntactical string literally means, "he himself also in the same manner." The cumulative effect "signifies total likeness [and] underscores the extent of the identity of the Son's involvement in the conditions of human experience common to other persons."[13]

The recipients of the epistle find a second confirmation of the incarnation in verse sixteen. The writer specifies that the Son certainly did not come in order to help angels, "but he helps the offspring of Abraham." This expression is the most common way of translating the verb ἐπιλαμβάνομαι.[14] By contrasting these two options, the author restates that the Son came on behalf of and in identity with mankind. However,

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[10]Perfect active indicative of the verb third person singular due to a collective neuter subject (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 399-400) of the verb κοινωνέω.

[11]Aorist active indicative third person singular of the verb μετέσχεν. This would be an ingressive aorist emphasizing the outset of sharing in the human condition which the Lord added to his already existing divine nature.

[12]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 60. See also O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 114.

[13]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 60.

[14]See NASBU, ESV, NIV, and NKJV.

Hughes believes that the meaning of this verb is "to lay hold of or appropriate" and therefore metaphorically means "to take on the nature of."[15] This expression would be an even clearer affirmation of the incarnation than simply offering help or aid to mankind.

In the next verse, the author expresses Jesus' solidarity with humanity a third time. Connecting his argument to the previous statement of identity with the children of Abraham, the writer concludes that Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every respect." The use of "brothers" emphasizes familial affiliation. The verb combination "had to be made like" underscores absolute necessity.[16] Lane states, "The element of moral obligation contemplated in the term ὤφειλεν, 'it was essential,' is clarified by the two purpose clauses, which follow in sequence."[17] Breaking up the verbal phrase with the words "in all respects," the writer of Hebrews again stresses with his choice of word order the degree of unity that the Son shares with mankind.[18]

In the final verse in this chapter, the author again states the fact of the incarnation with the words, "he is able to help those who are being tempted" by virtue of the fact that "he himself suffered when being tempted" (Heb 2:18). By using the same verb[19] to describe the experience of the Son of God and those he came to identify with—

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[15]Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 117-19, Logos. Note the KJV translation, "For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham." This is the first meaning mentioned in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, "to make the motion of grasping or taking hold of something, take hold of, grasp, catch." William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 373, Logos. See also Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 2:30, Logos.

[16]Imperfect active indicative of ὀφείλω (meaning, "to be indebted to someone in a financial sense, owe something to someone," BDAG, s.v. "ὀφείλω," 743) with the aorist passive infinitive of ὁμοιόω (meaning "to make like," BDAG, s.v. "ὁμοιόω," 707). The noun form of this second verb "likeness" is found in Philippians 2:7 which states that Jesus was "found in the likeness of men." This passage will be examined later in this chapter.

[17]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 64-65.

[18]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 119.

[19]The author uses the aorist passive participle of πειράζω in the first instance for Jesus and present passive participle in the second for mankind who still deal with temptation.

"being tempted,"—the writer draws a close parallel in their conditions. The Savior himself[20] suffered and was tempted just like those he came to redeem. He knows their frame; he knows their lot; he entered their world and became wholly like them.

In summary, the author of this epistle repeats and restates the solidarity that Jesus has with mankind in various ways.[21] He partook in their same physical nature; he identified with them by becoming like them rather than angels. Furthermore, in every respect he was conformed to the nature of his brothers. Finally, he genuinely suffered having been genuinely tempted. This comprehensive identification with mankind qualifies Jesus for a specific role which the next section addresses.

Reasons Given for the Incarnation in Hebrews 2:14-18

In addition to describing the incarnation and explaining its depth or comprehensiveness, the author of Hebrews provides reasons for the incarnation. These reasons are all closely related to his role as the great high priest of his people and his superior qualifications for this role.

Following the verb "partook," the author provides two reasons that Jesus became man.[22] First, Jesus took on humanity so that he might destroy the devil through his own death. Though Jesus' death and resurrection secure the ultimate destruction of Satan whose end lies in the lake of fire and brimstone,[23] it is best to interpret the first verb as "to cause something to lose its power or effectiveness, invalidate, make powerless"[24]

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[20]Again, note the use of the emphatic pronoun which the author repeatedly uses throughout his description of the Savior's incarnation and shared experience with mankind.

[21]Already in 2:10-11 the author has pointed out that Jesus suffered, sharing the lot of mankind, and was "not ashamed to call [mankind] brothers."

[22]ἵνα followed by compound aorist subjunctive verbs καταργέω (v. 14) and ἀπαλλάσσω (v. 15).

[23]Rev 20:10.

[24]BDAG, s.v. "καταργέω," 525.

rather than "to destroy." Lane states, "He assumed a mortal human nature 'in order that he might nullify' the power of an evil tyrant who possessed the power of death."[25] Christ's death annuls the power of the devil over any whom Christ has redeemed. Christ's incarnation made his death and the dissolution of Satan's power possible.

The author supplies a second reason in Hebrews 2:15. Jesus' incarnation and death delivers "all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." This verb means "to set free from a controlling state or entity, free, release."[26] While the previous verse focused on the physical state of mankind, the focus here becomes his moral condition. Man lives his whole life in fear of death, but that fear is taken away by Jesus who became a man himself.

Next, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews introduces one of his greatest themes—a theme that will dominate the rest of the book. In verse seventeen, we have the mention of Jesus being a "merciful and faithful high priest."[27] This description of Jesus is unique to the Epistle to the Hebrews.[28] Jesus was obliged to become like his brothers in every respect for the purpose of becoming their high priest.[29] As the rest of the epistle will show, in his role as the high priest of his people, Jesus accomplishes the other purposes mentioned thus far. He, as a high priest, annuls the power of Satan and delivers his people from fear. As the perfect mediator between God and man, sharing both the nature of God and partaking in the nature of man, Jesus can minister to his brothers "in

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[25]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 60–61. See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 173, and O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 115.

[26]BDAG, s.v. "ἀπαλλάσσω," 96.

[27]This theme is developed further in 3:1; 4:14–16; 5:1–10; 6:20; 7:14–19, 26–28; 8:1–6; 9:11–28; and 10:1-18.

[28]Hughes, *Hebrews*, 120; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 76; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 95. Attridge points out that the abrupt introduction of this term probably indicates that the readers were already familiar with this description of the Savior.

[29]Another purpose clause introduced by ἵνα and containing an aorist subjunctive is used here.

the service of God." Sharing humanity, Jesus represents mankind to God and removes the barrier of sin that stands between God and the people. In this role, Jesus demonstrates mercy to man and faithfulness to God.[30] This first attribute, in particular, "summarizes well the theme of solidarity developed in the preceding verses."[31] The second attribute of faithfulness shows that Jesus is both reliable and trustworthy. The author so tightly binds Jesus' priesthood with his humanity, that if his humanity is undermined in any way, his priesthood is likewise undermined.

Moving on to a fourth reason for the humanity of Christ, the author identifies a specific ministry of the high priest—to make propitiation for sin.[32] This verb has been the subject of great examination and debate.[33] In the 1960s Leon Morris published a definitive study of the biblical meaning of "propitiation." He writes, "Thus the concept of propitiation witnesses two great realities, the one, the reality and the seriousness of the divine reaction against sin, and the other, the reality and the greatness of the divine love which provided the gift which should avert the wrath from men."[34] Jesus' ability to fulfill his role as the merciful and faithful high priest stems from the fact, as the writer of Hebrews later points out, that he perfectly represents man while being the sacrifice to avert God's wrath himself (Heb 9:25-26; 10:10-22). He makes propitiation for the sins of

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[30]Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 77.

[31]Attridge, *Hebrews*, 95.

[32]This purpose is introduced by εἰς τὸ plus the infinitive. See Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 188; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 119.

[33]Gr. ἱλάσκομαι. The debate centers on the meaning of this verb. Does it mean "to expiate or make amends or wipe away sins"? See Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 189; and F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 88, Logos. Or does it mean "to propitiate or turn away or avert wrath"? Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 66; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 121; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, 77. For a thorough examination and definitive defense of the second position, see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 144-213. Though not offering significant proof for his statement, Attridge takes the position that in Hebrews "Christ's sacrifice is always directed at removing sin and its effects, not at propitiating God" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96). Attridge however acknowledges that the meaning of the word in the LXX includes both expiation as well as propitiation.

[34]Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 211.

the people through his own death and sacrifice. Had he not become man, he could not have become man's high priest.

Finally, the author gives a fifth reason for the incarnation in the last verse of the chapter. The suffering and temptation that Jesus experienced as a man uniquely qualifies him to provide help to those who are also tempted.[35] The Savior personally experienced the power of temptation from his childhood through the wilderness with Satan, and all the way to his sacrifice on the cross. He also faced the weakness of human nature experiencing hunger, thirst, exhaustion, sorrow, and pain. O'Brien comments, "Because he has been tested to the limit and remained faithful, he is perfectly qualified to help those who are tempted."[36] This help is always available.[37] Mankind's need for this help never ceases.[38] Throughout this passage, the author uses the repetition of sounds and alliteration in order to attract attention to and emphasize his points clearly.[39]

As he argues for the superiority of Jesus Christ over all other mediators or representatives, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews introduces into his discussion the reality of the incarnation. Jesus' act of becoming man brought him into complete solidarity and profound identity with the human condition. This undertaking uniquely qualified him to annul the power of Satan, to deliver his people from fear, to become their merciful and faithful high priest, to make propitiation for their sin, and to help them when

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[35]Attridge points out the author's affinity for alliteration, which may possibly serve to focus attention on the suffering and temptation of the Lord (*Hebrews*, 96). See also E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898), 169, Logos. Bullinger points out that all such forms of repetition of words, sounds, letters or ideas serve to attract attention and emphasize what the author considers important. He gives several examples of Paul's and the author of Hebrews use of alliteration for this purpose (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 175).

[36]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 123.

[37]David L. Allen writes, "The present tense followed by the aorist infinitive usually signals imperfective aspect, which is what the Greek text has, dunatai ('he is able') followed by boēthēsai ('to help'). Thus, the author expressed Jesus' continuing ability to help believers." David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2010), 225–26, Logos.

[38]The present passive participle indicates that temptations are varied and continuous.

[39]Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 169.

they are tempted. One exception to Jesus' identification with the common human experience stands out. The author directs his attention to this exception in 4:14-16.

Hebrews 4:14-5:10: The Great High Priest Suffered without Sin

The author of Hebrews emphatically and repeatedly describes the extent of the incarnation as he develops the implications of the solidarity that Jesus has with mankind. This theme receives additional attention in Hebrews 4:15-5:10. David Allen affirms, "These verses, along with the rest of the epistle, indicate that the author of Hebrews is less interested in *how* Jesus became a man than he is in Jesus *being* man, since this is the key to the high priestly office."[40] Just as in the previous passage, this discussion will first focus on the descriptions of the incarnation in this passage. Subsequently, attention will be given to the superiority of Jesus' priesthood in light of the incarnation.

Descriptions of the Incarnation in Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Having discussed how Jesus surpasses Moses as a mediator (3:1-6) and warned against unbelief and neglect of the rest provided by the Son of God (3:7-4:13), the author of Hebrews returns to the theme he introduced in 2:17—Jesus, the great high priest.[41] He continues to intertwine this theme with the incarnation. In 4:15, he asserts that Jesus can "sympathize with our weakness" and restates and clarifies that Jesus has "in every respect been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Even though Jesus, the Son of God, has "passed through the heavens" (Heb 4:14) as our high priest, this fact does not invalidate his ability to identify with mankind.[42] As has been his practice, the author uses emphatic language and constructions in order to highlight the implications of Jesus' incarnation. Lane points

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[40]Allen, *Hebrews*, 322. Emphasis in original.

[41]Morris, *The Lord from Heaven*, 85. Note the use of the name of Jesus, which emphasizes humanity.

[42]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 181.

out concerning the first half of verse fifteen, "The writer resorts to a double negative (οὐ … μή) to assert forcefully that Jesus identifies himself with those who feel defenseless in their situation."[43] As high priest, Jesus is able to sympathize which literally means "to suffer together with." Allen points out that modern readers should not limit this sympathy to common feelings. This verb "appears to include sympathy based on common experience, always includes the element of active help, and should not be limited to the psychological notion of 'feeling.'"[44] Hughes stresses that this common experience was both a fulfillment of prophecy and thoroughly genuine. He writes,

> There is no question of any incapacity on his part to sympathize with our weaknesses, for it was precisely our weaknesses that he embraced and made his own when he took our nature upon himself. The purpose of his coming was, in fulfilment of the prophecy of the messianic servant, to make our weaknesses his own (Mt. 8:17; Isa. 53:4). Thus his humanity was not a pretense or a masquerade; and the reality of the temptations he endured follows from the reality of the human nature he assumed.[45]

The general weaknesses[46] "common to man" "may include physical weakness or illness, social pressures, such as abuse or imprisonment, or the general weakness of the flesh through which we often fall into sin."[47] While it could theoretically include moral and spiritual weakness,[48] the author of the epistle places a clear limit to the ability of Jesus to sympathize. Though he was tempted[49] "in every respect"[50] (Heb 4:15) as other men, he

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[43]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 114.

[44]Allen, *Hebrews*, 304.

[45]Hughes, *Hebrews*, 171–72.

[46]This writer uses this word again in 5:2, 7:28, and 11:34. In the first two instances the emphasis is on the weakness of the high priest himself. Jesus, as high priest, took those weaknesses upon himself though they were not his originally. He did so to identify with mankind.

[47]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 183.

[48]Allen, *Hebrews*, 304.

[49]O'Brien suggests that this perfect passive participle carries "heightened proximity" and could be "intensive" (O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 183). This is the second time the verb is used of the Messiah.

[50]Attridge suggests that the language here is highly alliterative for emphasis (*Hebrews*, 140n28).

was tempted without sin. Again, the writer asserts both Jesus' unity with mankind as well as an essential distinction. The phrase translated "in all things, as we are" literally means "in all things, in like manner." Lane writes concerning this double emphasis, "The expression καθ' ὁμοιότητα, 'in quite the same way,' in v 15 involves both similarity and distinction, excluding identity. The writer nowhere suggests that Jesus had to become identical to fallen humanity in order to redeem it. In fact, in 7:27 he denies that Jesus had to offer sacrifice 'first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people.'"[51]

The fact that Jesus never succumbed to sin does not limit his ability to identify with mankind nor does it diminish his temptation.[52] The author clearly continues his line of reasoning that indeed the Son of God shares the weaknesses of mankind, experienced the same temptations as mankind, and therefore is supremely qualified to be the high priest of all who come to him.

Beginning in Hebrews 5, the author demonstrates how Jesus' experience reflects to a degree that of the normal high priest. First the high priest, beset with his own weaknesses, needs sacrifices for his own sins (Heb 5:2-3). Identification with the weaknesses of those whom he serves creates sympathy for the high priest. Secondly, a high priest must be appointed by God. This position is not an honor or responsibility anyone takes for himself. The author proceeds in reverse order first emphasizing that Jesus' priesthood corresponds because God also appointed him (Heb 5:5-6). Jesus' priesthood also parallels that of the normal high priest because, as is stated in 5:7-8, Jesus

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[51]Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 115.

[52]O'Brien states that the words "yet without sin" exclusively relate to the outcome of the temptation which never resulted in sin (*Hebrews*, 184). See also Hughes, *Hebrews,* 123-24. Hughes addresses the idea that the fact that Jesus never sinned means he cannot truly identify with sinners. He writes, "It is a fallacy also to imagine that the fact that he did not fall into sin means that he knows less about temptation than those who have given in to it; for his conquest of temptation, while ensuring his sinlessness, in fact increased rather than diminished his fellow feeling, since he knows the full force of temptation in a manner that we who have not withstood it to the end cannot know it." See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 140. Attridge affirms, "The point is not that Christ was not tempted to sin, but that he did not commit sin. Some commentators argue that Christ could not have been subject to temptations arising from his own sin. . . . Hebrews is not interested in such subtle psychologizing."

also sympathizes having suffered, having depended on God in prayer, and having learned through obedience (though as already emphasized in the previous verses Jesus never disobeyed and therefore never needed a sacrifice for his own sins).[53] The author highlights Jesus' dependence on God and emotional anguish while he lived on the earth.[54] O'Brien comments, "A vivid description of the humanity of Jesus is here presented. He is portrayed as one who prayed earnestly and with deep emotion. Like other high priests he was subject to weakness, but not the weakness of sin."[55] Lane agrees, "These moving words express how intensely Jesus entered the human condition, which wrung from him his prayers and entreaties, cries and tears."[56] The author leaves no doubt. In the same way man, in his weak and dependent state, has no other option than to cry out to God in his time of need, Jesus, as high priest struggling with real human weakness, also cried out with "prayers and supplications"[57] to the Father. He did so with confidence that the Father would be faithful to him. With the use of the word "reverence" to describe Jesus' relationship to the Father, the writer again emphasizes that Jesus remained submitted and devoted to His Father's will. He depended on the Father just as other believers must also

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[53]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 194.

[54]Literally "in the days of his flesh" (Heb 5:7) again emphasizing the true incarnation of the Eternal Son.

[55]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 197.

[56]Lane, *Hebrews*, 119.

[57]Authors differ in their interpretations of whether the prayers mentioned here refer to Jesus' experience in the garden (O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 198) or on the cross. For example, see Zane C. Hodges, *Hebrews*, in vol. 2 of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 791, Logos. Hodges argues for the second options with this observation, "The Greek here seems to reflect the Septuagint rendering of Psalm 22:24. Since that psalm is messianic for this author (cf. Heb. 2:12), it is probable that he actually has the sufferings of the Cross in mind, as does the psalm." Attridge offers a brief critique of this view and concludes that the language simply corresponds to the "traditional Jewish ideal of a righteous person's prayer" as seen commonly in the Psalms and in Hellenistic Jewish sources (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 148-49). Attridge also surveys the various suggested content of Jesus' prayers before offering the solution that the immediate text does not reveal the content of the prayers and to say that Jesus was heard does not necessarily mean that his prayers were answered affirmatively (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150).

depend.[58] Summarizing the vivid descriptions of these verses Morris concludes concerning the language affirming the humanity of Christ,

> But the most striking passage is v.7 ff. Here we read of 'the days of His flesh', His 'prayers and supplications', His 'strong crying and tears', His fear, His learning of obedience by the things that He suffered, and His being made perfect. Not very many people feel quite at home using language of this kind about the Lord. The fact that our writer employs it so easily and naturally shows how clearly he perceived the genuineness of Christ's humanity.[59]

Turning his attention from anguish in prayer, to learning and suffering, the author stresses another demonstration of Jesus' obedience and submission. In Hebrews 5:8, he writes, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." O'Brien points out that though learning and obedience are very naturally connected to suffering and discipline as the author later explains,[60] Jesus is different from any other son. Nevertheless, he still needed to learn obedience.[61] This lesson incorporated both "undeviating conquest of temptation" as well as "his obedience on the cross, where he offered himself to the Father as a sacrifice for sinful and disobedient mankind."[62] The author of the epistle continues to balance the identity of the son with sinners while maintaining a genuine and necessary distinction.

In this second passage, the author continues to describe in numerous statements and expressions the humanity of Christ. Though he was tempted in every way as the rest of mankind, though he was beset with weakness, though he depended upon the Father and submitted to him, though he suffered, he did all of this in comprehensive identity with mankind, yet he never sinned. This extensive camaraderie with mankind without the presence of sin uniquely qualified Jesus to serve as the high priest of

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[58]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 199.

[59]Morris, *The Lord from Heaven*, 85.

[60]Heb 12:5-11.

[61]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 200.

[62]Hughes, *Hebrews*, 187.

mankind.

Implications of the Incarnation from Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes a strong case for the humanity of Christ in order to prove the genuineness of the messianic priesthood. As he argues, he continues to develop his contention that Jesus exceeds all other priests and mediators as well. The writer addresses the concern that believers might fall away and abandon their messiah in the face of persecution and community pressure. In 4:14, he points to Jesus' ascension and return to the Father as both proof of his superiority and a motivation to hold fast to one's confession of him. He adds the description of Jesus as the Son of God. These two qualifications themselves elevate Jesus' status as the greatest of high priests.

The author adds another qualification that has already been discussed. Though he "passed through the heavens," he can still sympathize with believers.[63] His identification with them is not diminished despite his celestial credentials. However, he is not like sinners in every way. The author clearly states in the next verse that he is "without sin." Therefore, in contrast to other priests, Jesus, the Son of God, was not constrained to purify himself or offer sacrifices for his own sin before he made the prescribed sacrifices for the people (Heb 5:3). Though beset himself with human weakness, Jesus required no sacrifice for his own sake. Finally, the priesthood of the Savior surpasses previous priesthoods in its duration. Quoting Psalm 110, the author specifies that the priesthood which Jesus founded is eternal (Heb 5:6).[64]

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has two main concerns in this passage. First, Christ's priesthood is legitimate because of his humanity as clearly visible

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[63]O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 181; Allen, *Hebrews*, 304.

[64]Later in 7:12, the author will point out that the changes that took place in the priesthood necessitated a change in the law. However, since Jesus' priesthood is eternal, it will never require change.

in his sympathy, his temptation, his dependence on the Father, and his suffering. Secondly, the priesthood that Jesus established is superior by virtue of his ascension, his unique relationship to the Father, his sinlessness, and his eternality. Combined with the previously examined passage, the author makes a strong argument for the humanity of Christ and presents the implications of his complete identity with the readers and their challenges and temptations. As the perfect high priest, he will never abandon them. The only proper response for them is to hold fast to him in the face of trials and difficulties.

Philippians 2:5-8: The Incarnation, Humility in Humanity

Because of its importance in describing the incarnation of the Savior, interpreters have subjected Philippians 2:5-11 to rigorous exegetical scrutiny. From its form to its origin and from the meaning of its parts to the meaning of its whole, hardly a word or phrase in this passage lacks multiple proposed interpretations. Many of these proposals are completely speculative.[65] Nevertheless, the thrust of this passage is clear.[66] The limited scope of this thesis prevents investigation and discussion of each of these problems. Only those problems which directly relate to the humanity of Christ will be addressed.[67] The following comments will focus on the purpose of the passage (ethical or

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[65]For the most comprehensive investigation of the various schools of interpretation including a survey of the potential solutions for each exegetical difficulty, see Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

[66]Many commentators conclude that this section is indeed contains an example of an early Christian hymn. However, these same commentators adopt various positions on questions concerning the origin of this hymn (Pauline or pre-Pauline), the structure of the hymn, whether it is quoted or adapted by Paul, and many other form, literary, and source critical questions. See Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, The Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 76-79; and Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 24-95.

[67]Much discussion in research on this passage is related to the form (early Christian hymn or high prose), origin (Pauline, incorporated by Paul, or adapted and incorporated by Paul), as well as insights gleaned into early Christian Worship. While these are fascinating and important questions, they do not directly relate to the questions concerning how Paul describes the incarnation and humanity of Jesus which are more relevant to this thesis. Space limitations simply do not allow for even a cursory review of these questions. Likewise, a discussion of the purpose of Phil 2:9-11, which is often used to argue against an ethical interpretation versus a kerygmatic interpretation, falls outside the purview of this thesis. The idea, briefly stated. is that since the exaltation of Jesus (vv. 9-11) cannot be imitated by the believer, Paul's primary purpose vv. 5-8 cannot be to encourage imitation. In response to this view, it should be stated that

kerygmatic), the meaning of "form of God," the meaning of "count equality with God a thing to be grasped," and the meaning of "made himself nothing" as defined by the qualifying phrases "taking on the form of a slave," "being born in the likeness of men," and "being found in human form."

Most commentators agree that Paul wrote the book of Philippians from Rome while in prison.[68] Paul's certainly writes in order to express his gratitude to the church for their support and generosity (Phil 4:10-20). However, he also uses the letter as an occasion to encourage unity in the fellowship which was currently under threat due to conflict between two sisters (4:2).[69] Paul also takes the opportunity to warn the church in Philippi concerning external threats to their faith (3:1-3, 3:18-19).[70] Furthermore, he wanted to encourage the saints in the church that despite his present imprisonment, the

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if the first half of the hymn emphasizes Jesus Christ as an example to the believer, the second half does not have to as well. Instead, the second half can point to the motivation for following the example of Jesus found in the character of God who rewards the obedient as seen in his exaltation of the Son. The ethical interpretation (see discussion below) seems to have more contextual and theological support (see Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 68-74, 84-88). For a balanced view of the implications as well as the assistance provided in this type of analysis—particularly in this passage—see Morna D. Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11," in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70 Geburtstag*, ed. E. Earle Ellis and Erich Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 157-58.

[68]For a defense of this traditional view as well as an answer to the arguments against it and for a location such as Ceasarea or Ephesus, see Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 5-8, Logos; and Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 19-26, Logos. For an alternative perspective, see G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 25, Logos. Hansen concludes that a definitive decision on the origin of the letter "does not significantly affect interpretation of the letter." The author acknowledges with regard to O'Brien's commentary on Philippians that William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company released a statement on August 15, 2016 revealing that this commentary falls short of accepted standards of documentation and citing secondary standards. That statement includes O'Brien's acknowledgment and apology. Despite this development, the author still considers O'Brien's work very helpful, though somewhat tainted.

[69]See also 1:27; 2:1-5, 14; 3:17, 20 on the theme unity and harmony within the fellowship (Hansen, *Philippians*, 25).

[70]Whether the threats were coming from multiple parties or one consistent source has been a subject of great debate. According to some commentators, up to eighteen different proposals have been tabulated concerning the specific identification of the opponents against whom Paul was warning the Philippians church (Hansen, *Philippians*, 25-28). See also Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 29-34, Logos. These threats certainly included the characteristics of the teachings of the Judaizers (3:1-3) and possibly also some antinomian principles (3:18-19).

gospel was spreading (1:12-20) and to explain the return of Epaphroditus (2:25-30), who had faithfully served both Paul and the church. Finally, Paul mentions his own plans to send Timothy (2:19-24) and to visit the church personally (1:25-26).[71]

Of these sundry reasons for writing, the threat to unity directly relates to the passage under consideration in this thesis. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ illustrates the humility needed for the saints to lay aside selfishness and personal ambition which work to destroy like-mindedness and intimate fellowship. Paul, anticipating his later challenge to Euodia and Syntyche (4:2), lays the groundwork for that rebuke by establishing the principle that believers should be guided by interest for others instead of self (2:4). This same attitude characterized the Savior in his condescension to take on humanity (2:5-8). A brief discussion of key problems in this crucial passage follows.

The Primary Purpose of Philippians 2:5-11: Ethical or Kerygmatic?

Commentators differ on Paul's reasoning and purpose in Philippians 2:5-11. They ask and come to different conclusions in answer to the following question: Does Paul expect the Philippians to imitate the example of Jesus' humility (ethical purpose) or does Paul emphasize the believers position in Christ as the motivating factor for showing greater concern for one another rather than self (kerygmatic purpose)?[72] This literary question closely relates to another grammatical and syntactical question concerning what verb should be supplied in the ellipsis in the second half of verse five. Therefore, this second question will be addressed first.

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[71]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 38. In addition to the six reasons for writing mentioned above, Hawthorne adds that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi simply because he loved the church and wanted to remain in contact with them. Furthermore, he wanted to encourage them to rejoice in all circumstances, including the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, xlvii-xlviii).

[72]Moisés Silva, while adopting the kerygmatic interpretation, maintains that to place it in opposition to the ethical interpretation creates a false dichotomy because the kerygmatic interpretation has direct impact on personal ethics (Silva, *Philippians*, 97).

For the most part, translations handle the missing verb in the second half of Philippians 2:5 in two ways that follow the two possible solutions to the question of the primary purpose of this passage. The NASBU is indicative of the ethical interpretation when it says, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (see also NIV, NKJV, NET) while other translations follow the kerygmatic interpretation similar to the ESV, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (see also NET translator note, RSV, HCSB). In place of the missing verb, translators provide either the simple copulative "*was*", or they repeat the idea of the first half of the verse which contains the second person imperative "have this attitude" and insert the words "*you have*" in Christ Jesus or "*is yours*" in Christ Jesus.

Commentators siding with the simple copulative argue that this interpretation is most natural and straightforward solution for the ellipsis. In fact, this solution does not even require the insertion of the verb. Rather the copulative would be understood.[73] This solution maintains better parallelism in grammar and sense with the first half of the sentence. This interpretation also fits the context better as it matches the ethical interpretation discussed below. On the other hand, Silva argues that this interpretation requires two different meanings for the preposition "ἐν" as well as the fact that it uses the simple dative second person preposition while the reciprocal would be more natural.[74]

Those who adopt the second option argue that supplying the verb from the first

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[73]Fee, *Philippians*, 200; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 205; and Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 100, Logos; Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 90. See also C. F. D. Moule's translation in "Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5–11," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 264.

[74]Silva, *Philippians*, 96. However, as Hawthorne points out, neither solution allows for perfect consistency in the meaning of the prepositional phrases "in you" and "in Christ" (Silva, *Philippians*, 81). Hawthorne's reconstruction which allow for an ethical interpretation while still providing the verb "have this attitude" from the first half of the sentence depends on adopting a questionable reading from the majority text (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 78, 80).

clause is the most natural solution.[75] However this proposal, as O'Brien points out, results in a tautology.[76] This proposal does allow for more consistency in the use of the preposition in the first half and second half of the sentence. Nevertheless, since this decision so closely relates to the question of the purpose of the passage, the key arguments for the ethical interpretation and the kerygmatic interpretation will be presented and evaluated.

The primary argument for the ethical interpretation of Philippians 2:5-11 is that it this interpretation best fits the context. Paul enjoins the church to place the interests of others above their own personal interests in the immediately preceding verses. He then points to Jesus' humility as an example. O'Brien contends that the passage clearly belongs in the present context and also forms a key part of Paul's argument in the wider context stretching from 1:27 to 2:18.[77] To interpret this passage as instruction to think according to your identity in Christ rather than to adopt the attitude of humility found in Christ Jesus would result in the addition of a new, unrelated idea.[78] Additionally, the imitation of Jesus is a common Pauline theme (see Rom 15:1-7; 1 Cor 11:1, Eph 5:1-2, 1 Thess 1:6).[79]

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[75]Silva, *Philippians*, 96. Silva's proposal differs from the standard translations. He suggests the translation, "Have this attitude in yourselves, which *you have* in Christ Jesus." However, it should be acknowledged that while it might seem more natural to provide the same verb root, the form must be changed from imperative to indicative.

[76]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 257.

[77]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 166.

[78]Hooker goes so far as to suggest that an overzealous concern for the original form and setting has led some interpreters to the kerygmatic interpretation. She offers additional critique of this view in Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11," 154. See also Moule, "Further Reflexions," 269. Moule correctly emphasizes that "the first concern any exegesis is, if possible, to determine [the text's] meaning in the present setting and as used by Paul." Therefore, while the origin of the hymn might make for interesting speculation and possible insight in to early church worship it does not significantly affect the interpretation of the passage.

[79]The theme of imitation is also emphasized in the call of Jesus to follow Him or "come after" him (Matt 9:9, 16:24, 19:21: Mark 1:7, 2:14, 8:34, 10:21, 44-45; Luke 5:27, 9:23, 59, 18:22; John 1:43, 10:27, 12:26, 21:19), as well as his explicit instruction to follow his example (John 13:13-15). Peter also calls for the imitation of Christ (1 Pet 2:20-21). See Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 80.

Repetition of key terms by Paul solidifies the connection with the context and helps resolve the question of the purpose of this passage.[80] Hawthorne summarizes the ethical position with these words, "Although [the hymn] may have been originally composed for Christological or soteriological reasons, Paul's motive in using it here is not theological but ethical. His object is not to give instruction in doctrine, but to reinforce instruction in Christian living. And he does this by appealing to the conduct of Christ."[81]

Commentators who argue for the kerygmatic interpretation suggest that believers are not able to emulate Jesus' actions and that this interpretation creates a problem with verses nine to eleven which can only apply to Jesus.[82] Nevertheless, as previously mentioned Jesus, Paul, and Peter all enjoin the believer to follow and imitate the Savior. Furthermore, the second half of this passage can simply lay down the principle that those who honor God by following in the humility of Christ Jesus can count on God's gracious response to their obedience. Hawthorne clarifies that the second half of the passage does not teach that Christ received the reward of exaltation for his self-abnegation or that God works on a system of merit where believers earn his blessings. Instead, Paul describes

> the natural or logical outcome of [Jesus'] humility. In other words, these conjunctions [at the beginning of verse 9] affirm what Jesus taught, namely that in the divine order of things self-humbling leads inevitably to exaltation. This is an inflexible law of God's kingdom that operates without variance, equally applicable for Christians at Philippi as for Christ himself.[83]

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[80]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 80. Specifically, Paul used the verb "to think, consider" in v. 5 twice already in v. 2. Also, the noun for humility in v. 3 is found in verb form in v. 8. See also Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11," 152-53.

[81]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 79.

[82]See Fowl, *Philippians*, 107; Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 70-74 and 287-91. For an answer to this argument, see O'Brien, *Philippians*, 261, who points out that significant links between this passage and Phil 3:20-21 exist. The later passage explicitly describes the glorification of the believer.

[83]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 90.

Hooker points to the parallels between this passage and Philippians 3:20-21 where Paul describes the transformation of the believer at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Christ was glorified so also believers have this expectation. This passage is another example of what she terms the "interchange" where "Christ becomes what we are—so enabling us to become what he is."[84] The second half of the hymn, therefore, does not exclude an ethical approach to interpretation.

Additionally, while it is true that Paul uniquely contributes and develops the theme of the believer's identity in Christ, it is not necessary to read that theme into every combination of a preposition with a name or title of the Lord.[85] Proponents of the kerygmatic view solve the problem that the passage lacks coherence with its context by leaning heavily on the common assumption that Philippians 2:5-11 is a pre-Pauline hymn that was inserted. However, as O'Brien points out, though that theory might be valid, no one has been able to prove it without question. Therefore, interpreters should not base their interpretation on this conjecture.[86]

On the balance, the arguments for the kerygmatic interpretation are not as strong as that of the ethical.[87] Considering this weakness along with the valid reasons for

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[84]Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11," 155. See also 2 Cor 5:21, 8:9; Gal 3:13, and 4:4.

[85]Moule points out this fallacy in "Further Reflexions," 264-65.

[86]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 259. While most interpreters do assume that this passage is indeed a hymn, the origin and structure of the hymn remains to be a topic of great discussion (see Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 24-62). Robert Strimple points out the dilemma presented related to the origin of the text. While the question of whether Paul wrote the hymn may be of little concern to the pastor, church member, counselor, or counselee, the conclusions concerning this question lead to hermeneutical assumptions. While there is no theologically compelling reason to reject Pauline composition, many scholars do so, and then interpret the passage completely independently of the context. However, if the scholar examines the text in its context, he finds it difficult to avoid the conclusion that this passage encourages ethical imitation of the Savior. See Robert Strimple, "Philippians 2:5-11: Some Exegetical Conclusions," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 no. 2 (1978): 249-50, Logos. Strimple states, "It becomes clear, however, that opting for non-Pauline authorship is not an innocuous decision when *coupled* with the insistence that the passage therefore is to be interpreted altogether without regard to how Paul used it in his argument or even how Paul might have understood it" (250) and provides quotes from numerous authors such as Martin, Murphy-O'Conner, and Harvey who excise the passage from its surrounding and interpret it independent of Pauline usage.

[87]For an excellent summary of the critiques of this view, see Strimple, "Philippians 2:5-11," 252-56.

accepting the simple copulative as the solution to the ellipsis, the best translation of Philippians 2:5b is, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Existing in the Form of God

The next problem discussed draws the reader into contemplation of the implications of the incarnation and the humanity of Christ. Paul asserts, just as the writer of Hebrews in 2:14, the pre-existence of Christ Jesus. He states, "although he existed in the form of God."[88] The nature of this pre-existing state relates to the meaning of "form of God"—a phrase that has been subjected to multiple interpretations.

O'Brien lists several options for the definition of "form of God."[89] The traditional interpretation which most translations reflect would find the meaning of "form" (Gr. μορφή) as referring to the being or essence of God. Silva states that in this phrase it speaks of the "essential or characteristic attributes" of God.[90] The strongest argument for this translation is that this phrase points back to the pre-existence of Christ Jesus before his incarnation.[91] The context supports this meaning as well. It corresponds with the parallel phrase "equality with God" in the same verse as well as the use of the same word coupled with "servant" in the following verse.[92]

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[88]The verb is a present active participle of the verb ὑπάρχω describing Jesus' prior circumstance or existence.

[89]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 206-11.

[90]Silva, *Philippians*, 100-101. See also J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1913), 110, 127-33, Logos. Lightfoot is one of the earlier and strongest proponents of finding the meaning of "form" in its classical Greek or Hellenistic usage. Since this word only appears three times in the New Testament (twice in this passage and also in Mark 16:12), it is difficult to determine meaning exclusively on biblical usage. See also Fee, *Philippians*, 204; and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 83-84.

[91] Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 3:431, Logos.

[92]Silva, *Philippians*, 101. Hawthorne treats the necessity for parallel meaning as conclusive saying, "These two expressions μορφῇ θεοῦ and μορφὴν δούλου, together demand a new and fresh meaning for μορφῇ. . . . And this new meaning must be one that will apply equally well to both phrases since μορφῇ θεοῦ was obviously coined in antithesis to μορφὴν δούλου" (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 82). He also asserts that this consideration is fatal to the view that "form" means "glory." Furthermore, the following phrase "equality with God" with the definite article points back to "form of

Two other popular interpretations find the locus of meaning in the Old Testament background. The first understands "the form of God" to refer to "glory" based on the common association of God's visible manifestation with the glory of God.[93] Paul Fienberg points out two difficulties with this view. First, "form" and "glory" simply are not synonyms. Secondly, this meaning for "form" does not fit with verse seven where Jesus takes on the "form" of a servant.[94] Furthermore, the presence of the preposition "in" undermines the strength of this view.

The second attempt to find an Old Testament background leans heavily on parallelism between Adam and Jesus in this passage. Looking to Genesis 1:26-27, some interpreters equate "form" in Philippians with "image" in Genesis.[95] However, the lack of usage of these terms in reasonable proximity, the lack of consistency in translation of the words into the Greek from the Hebrew texts, and the number of overlapping synonyms used in the Hebrew original undermine this view. The linguistic connections simply are not strong enough.[96]

These three views represent the most common solutions to the meaning of the

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God" and supports this view (see Hawthorne's full discussion, *Philippians*, 82-84).

[93]See, for example, Exod 16:10; 24:16-17; 33:17-23; 1 Kgs 8:11; Isa 6:3; Ezek 1:28, 43:3; 44:2. Paul also uses similar language in Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:6 (Fowl, *Philippians*, 92). Other proponents of this view include O'Brien (*Philippians*, 211); Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon* (Winona Lake, IN: Alpha Publications, 1980), 67-68; and Hansen (*Philippians*, 136-38).

[94]Paul D. Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Analysis of Phil 2:6-11," *Trinity Journal* 1, no. 1 (1980): 30, Logos.

[95]For a summary of this view, see Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11," 160-63. One of the stronger reasons that Hooker cites is the placement of the negation before "thing to be grasped" instead of before the verb strengthening the contrast with v. 7, "but emptied himself." T. Francis Glasson offers several points of critique in ''Two Notes on the Philippians Hymn (II.6–11)," *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974–75): 137-39.

[96]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 28-30. Feinberg also indicates that this interpretation puts too much emphasis on the visible manifestation of Christ rather than his nature which is immediately equated with God. Furthermore, Feinberg warns that this Adam/Christ parallelism has been often used to promote an adoptionist Christology (27-30). Attempts to make these connections with either the manifestation of the glory of God or the Genesis passage in the Old Testament suffer due to lack of sufficient examples from the LXX or inconsistencies on the part of the LXX translators. See also Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 82-83.

phrase "form of God."[97] In light of its potential array of meaning but limited use in the New Testament, the safest approach to solving this problem it to look at the context. The phrase "equality with God" describes what Christ Jesus already possessed in God's form. Furthermore, the contrast between "form of God" and "form of a servant" indicates that "form of God" should be interpreted as sharing the essential divine characteristics of God. This interpretation is also consistent with the pre-existing deity of Jesus Christ as taught by Paul and other New Testament authors.

Counting Equality with God a Thing to Be Grasped

The next key phrase in this passage presents a number of problems due to the its uniqueness. The various interpretations differ, for the most part, in nuance as interpreters have tried to determine in conjunction with the meaning of the phrase what exactly it was that Jesus did not grasp. Thankfully, a considerable consensus has developed in light careful linguistic studies that have gained traction.

Various suggested solutions are first presented and then the more convincing solutions that have gained general support will be explained. This passage has an interesting history of interpretation which has led to a consensus among commentators as more precise work has elucidated the meaning. The word translated "a thing to be grasped"[98] has been interpreted to mean "the act of seizing," "what is seized," or "something regarded as gain or utilized."[99] Much discussion of the meaning in this context revolves around whether the noun has an active meaning—the act of snatching or

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[97]O'Brien mentions "mode of being," and "status" (*Philippians*, 210-11) as further alternatives. For a discussion of various interpretations founded on religious myths of the primal man, see Martin's discussion (*Hymn of Christ*, 120-33).

[98]Gr. ἁρπαγμὸν an accusative form of the noun which is a *hapax legomenon*.

[99]W. Foerster, "*harpázō, harpagmós*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 80, Logos.

robbery (as seen in the KJV)[100]—or passive—the thing which is possessed or grabbed (as seen in the NASBU or ESV). Figuring into the solution of this problematic phrase is also the amount of Adam and Christ parallelism that many interpreters find in the passage.[101]

Laying the groundwork for an eventual consensus, Lightfoot commented that the noun typically has the meaning "a piece of plunder" but in conjunction with certain verbs approaches "a highly prized possession or an unexpected gain."[102] C. F. D. Moule clarified that the ending of the noun suggested an abstract or conceptual meaning of grasping or seizing that does not necessarily require a concrete object.[103] Roy Hoover produced considerable evidence that the usage of this word with the verb, "consider"[104] adopts an idiomatic meaning pointing to something already possessed and readily available. He simply translates the phrase to say, that the incarnate Lord "did not regard being equal with God as . . . something to use for his own advantage."[105] Most recent

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[100]See Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 134, for a description of this view which comes from the Latin Fathers and was picked up the translators of the KJV.

[101]Silva, *Philippians*, 102n21. Silva further explains that the passive idea could be subsequently translated with a positive nuance ("windfall, advantage") or a negative one ("booty, prize"). Additionally, interpreters also debate whether the noun refers to something already in one's possession being grasped or held fast or to something which and individual does not yet possess but is tempted to snatch for himself. Silva presents a possible translation for each of these variations and concludes, "This very diversity of interpretations should warn us not to move from the ambiguous word to the meaning of the passage as a whole, but vice versa," (103). Hansen summarizes the four most likely options as: "grasping for something already possessed, . . . something to be grasped that is already possessed, . . . something to be grasped that is not possessed, . . . something to be selfishly exploited that is already possessed" (Hansen, *Philippians*, 142-46). For additional discussion of other proposals including a brief history of the development of interpretations, see O'Brien, *Philippians*, 212-16, and Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 134-64. Martin accepts a position similar to the third position described by Hansen above. For a critique of his arguments, see Hansen, *Philippians*, 144-45. Lightfoot argued for the second view that Hansen described (*Philippians*, 134) while laying the foundation for further work in philology.

[102]Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 111. Glasson demonstrates that Lightfoot put forth this view clearly even though it was ignored for almost a century. He also discusses the fallacies of interpreting this phrase ignoring its idiomatic nature. See Glasson, ''Two Notes on the Philippians Hymn," 133-37. Roy Hoover demonstrates that around the same time Lightfoot published his comments Werner Jaeger also came to a similar conclusion. Roy Hoover, "The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 95, 102).

[103]Moule "Further Reflexions," 271.

[104]Gr. ἡγήσατο Aorist, middle, indicative.

[105]Hoover, "The Harpagmos Enigma," 118.

commentators accept this translation or something very similar.[106]

He Emptied Himself

The next phrase comes from the Greek verb κενόω that has come to be so closely identified with this passage that interpreters and theologians use it to refer to the passage, that is the *kenosis* of the Savior. Care must be taken in determining the meaning of this key word. Many interpreters and theologians have strayed from orthodoxy by implicitly or even explicitly suggesting that Christ gave up some aspect of his deity in the incarnation.[107] Paul states that the Lord "emptied himself"[108] without specifying of what he emptied himself. O'Brien writes of this phrase, "This is a most striking phrase which has no convincing parallel in the whole of Greek literature. The emphatic position of ἑαυτόν ('himself') and the form of the verb (an aorist active) strongly suggest that this act of 'emptying' was voluntary on the part of the preexistent Christ."[109] The verb can have a metaphysical meaning or a metaphorical meaning.[110] The metaphysical meaning would depend on a further object explaining specifically of what Christ Jesus divested himself. Translators that adopt the metaphorical meaning, on the other hand, render this verb as "he made himself of no reputation" (KJV) or "he made himself nothing" (ESV).

A survey of the use of this verb in the LXX and the NT reveals that biblical

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[106]Most commentators agree with Hoover's conclusion. For example, see Silva, *Philippians*, 104; Fee, *Philippians*, 206; Melick, *Philippians*, 103; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 215-16; and Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 35-36.

[107]For a brief critique of the kenotic theories proposed by various theologians, see chap. 3; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 327-30, Logos; Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 549-52, Logos; and Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 22-23, 40-43.

[108]Gr. ἐκένωσεν in the aorist active indicative preceded by the reflexive accusative pronoun ἑαυτὸν, placed before the verb for emphasis.

[109]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 217.

[110]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 40. For a comprehensive discussion of the additional views some of which have garnered wider following than others, see Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 165-96.

writers exclusively use the verb in the metaphorical sense. Twice in the Greek translation of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 14:2 and 15:9), translators used the passive form to describe the gates of Judah and the young women of Judah. In both cases, Jeremiah depicts the subjects as languishing or weakened. Three times in the NT Paul uses the passive of this verb to describe faith (Rom 4:14), the cross (1 Cor 1:17), and his own boasting (2 Cor 9:3) as being "made void" or "meaningless." In the only other appearance of the active voice other than Philippians 2:7, Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 9:15 that he would "rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting." Clearly, biblical usage consistently demonstrates the metaphorical meaning of κενόω.

O'Brien finds further support for the metaphorical meaning in the context. Paul follows his statement that Christ "emptied himself" with two participles—"taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."[111] Silva expresses that these participles are simultaneous with "being found in human form" in verse eight. All three phrases indicate the means by which the Savior emptied himself—he made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant and by being made in the likeness of men.[112] While these participial phrases elucidate the meaning of the main verb, each contributes to the proper understanding of the nature of the humanity that Jesus Christ added to his divinity. Each participial phrase, therefore, deserves some comment.

Taking the form of a servant. The majority of interpreters take the first participial phrase which qualifies the main verb in Philippians 2:7,[113] "taking the form of

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[111]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 217. See also Fee, *Philippians*, 211; and Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 42. These participles are best described as modal.

[112]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86. Silva only specifies that the first two of the three participles describe means (Silva, *Philippians*, 105).

[113]In order to clarify the grammatical structure, the complex sentence that begins in v. 5 has a main verb in the form of an imperative, "Think." The relative clause that describes Jesus Christ that begins v. 6 has three main verbs: "regard" (v. 6), "emptied" (v. 7), and "humbled" (v. 8). The first of these three verbs is aorist middle while the second and third are both aorist active with the reflexive pronoun. This combination indicates the voluntary nature of Jesus Christ's incarnation. The first of these three verbs is qualified by a participial phrase: "existing in the form of God" (v. 6); the second is qualified by three participial phrases: "taking the form of a servant," "being born in the likeness of men," (v. 7), and "being

a servant," to be a participle of manner.[114] This phrase indicates Jesus emptied himself through addition and not subtraction. That is to say, Jesus added to his divine nature an additional new human nature. He did this, first, by taking[115] to himself the nature of a servant. O'Brien surveys six options[116] for the meaning of this phrase before concluding,

> Slavery pointed to the extreme deprivation of one's rights, even those relating to one's own life and person. When Jesus emptied himself by embracing the divine vocation and becoming incarnate he became a slave, without any rights whatever. He did not exchange the nature or form of God for that of a slave; instead, he displayed the nature or form of God in the nature or form of a slave, thereby showing clearly not only what his character was like, but also what it meant to be God.[117]

Fee confirms O'Brien's conclusion commenting that this interpretation best fits the context of the injunctions by Paul found in the preceding verses. Since Jesus himself became a person "without advantages, with no rights or privileges,"[118] believers can also consider others more important than themselves and give preference to others as they follow his example. The parallelism with the previous phrase "form of God"

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found in human form" (v. 8); the final main verb in the relative clause is qualified by another participial phrase: "becoming obedient" (v. 8).

[114]J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Philippians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2008), 99, Logos; I-Jin Loh and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 59, Logos; Silva, *Philippians*, 105; and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86. To be clear, some interpreters call this construction a participle of manner and others a means which Wallace places in two different categories. Regardless, these same interpreters translate the phrase with the preposition, "*by*"—"by taking the form of a servant." Wallace has a discussion of this phrase among his examples of participle of means (*Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 630). Whether the nomenclature of "means" or "manner" is adopted, most commentators consulted broadly agree that this participle and the following answer the question, "How did the Savior empty himself?" Since the participle is aorist, the action of the participle is simultaneous with the action of the verb (Loh and Nida, *Philippians*, 59).

[115]Gr. λαβών, aorist active participle.

[116]See O'Brien, *Philippians*, 218-22. These options include (1) the interpretation of the kenotic theologians that Jesus Christ actually gave up the form of God, (2) the mythical interpretation that he placed himself under demonic powers, (3) he played the role of the Servant of the Lord as described in the servant songs of Isaiah, (4) he adopted the role of the righteous sufferer based on historical Maccabean Judaism ideals, (5) he took the form of a slave (O'Brien's preferred solution), and (6) he became the slave to God as the "Lordly Example." For further discussion of the possible solutions to this exegetical problem, see Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86-87, and Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 169-96.

[117]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 223–24.

[118]Fee, *Philippians*, 213. See also Moule, "Further Reflexions," 268.

reemphasizes that Jesus added to himself a nature appropriate to a slave and not just the appearance. Fowler explains that interpreting this phrase simply in terms of appearance would not suffice since some slaves were poorly dressed and others dressed more affluently depending on their roles. The point is not their visible form which may or may not indicate their freedom or slavery.[119] Paul emphasizes the slave's status. A slave has no rights, no independent will, and no possessions for their own benefit.

Being born in the likeness of men. Next, Paul describes Jesus' act of emptying himself as "being born in the likeness of men."[120] He emphasizes that it was in similitude to mankind that Jesus was born.[121] The participle means "to come into being through process of birth" or "to come into existence."[122] By combining the verbal with the preposition, Paul "stresses the notion of 'beginning' or 'becoming', in the sense of 'coming into a position, or a state.'"[123] Here the apostle explicitly declares the means by which the eternal Son of God entered humanity—he was born like any other human being. Paul utilizes a word, "likeness" that he employs four other times in Romans[124] which can refer "to the state of having common experiences . . . or appearance."[125] According to O'Brien, the word points to essential equivalence or identity and therefore corresponds perfectly to the thought of Hebrews 4:15, Jesus "became in all respects like

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[119]Fowl, *Philippians*, 97.

[120]This phrase parallels the previous phrase and modifies the main verb. For a survey of the syntactical options, see Greenlee, *Philippians*, 100.

[121]Gr. ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων, a dative of reference followed by genitive placed before the participle for emphasis. The participle γενόμενος is aorist middle and occurs simultaneously with the main verb (Silva, *Philippians*, 105).

[122]William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 197, Logos.

[123]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 224.

[124]Rom 1:23, 5:14, 6:5, and 8:4. The only other use of this word in the NT is Rev 9:7. On the other hand, it is used 38x in the LXX.

[125]BDAG, s.v. "ὁμοιότης," 707.

other human beings."[126] The context makes it clear that while Jesus did not conform to fallen human nature, he also did not merely act as if he was human.[127] He identified with humankind thoroughly and comprehensively while maintaining his perfectly sinless state. Though commentators have spent much ink on this short verse, Martin's conclusion stands without question, "Whatever else Philippians ii.7 declares, His true identity with men is apparent."[128]

Being found in human form. The next participial phrase presents a grammatical and structural dilemma. "Being found in human form" could finish the preceding thought with a third similar description of Christ Jesus' act of emptying himself or it could begin a new sentence and introduce the manner in which the incarnate Lord "humbled himself."[129] The meaning of the phrase[130] does not create as many problems as its placement. Paul uses a synonym "appearance" with the words already used "likeness" and "form." The distinction is that the new descriptor primarily focuses on physical appearance.[131] O'Brien explains that, even though this word is only used twice in the NT (1 Cor 7:31) and once in the LXX (Isa 3:17), classical usage often

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[126]O'Brien, *Philippians,* 225.

[127]Hansen, *Philippians,* 152.

[128]Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 191.

[129]Translations and exegetes are equally divided on this difficult question that relates to which of the numerous proposed structures is adopted for the hymn as well as grammatical and syntactical issues (see Greenlee, *Philippians*, 102). Fee argues that this phrase expresses the way in which Christ humbled himself in the same way the first participle in v. 6 expresses the way Christ emptied himself and therefore should be read with the following verb (*Philippians*, 215). O'Brien believes that the connective more likely connects independent verbs rather than parallel participial phrases and, therefore, also argues that this phrase modifies "humbled himself" (*Philippians*, 226). Hansen agrees with this reasoning while maintaining that there is still strong synthetic parallelism (*Philippians*, 154). See also Silva, *Philippians*, 106. Hawthorne, on the other hand, takes for granted based on the close parallel structure and the similar meaning that all three participles in this string describe the means by which Christ emptied himself (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 85-88).

[130]Gr. σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος, dative of reference for the noun "appearance" followed by aorist passive participle "to find" followed a comparative conjunction with another noun "as a man."

[131]"The generally recognized state or form in which something appears, outward appearance, form, shape" (BDAG, s.v. "σχῆμα," 981).

indicated the appearance or structure that could be perceived by the physical senses. Therefore, it always denotes the outward form or structure perceptible to the senses.[132] When used with the passive participle "to be found" the word "refers to the way in which Jesus' humanity appeared."[133] This tightly structured passage, whether high prose or hymn, reiterates in numerous ways the idea that Jesus added human nature to his already existing divine nature. Paul seems to emphasize what the Gospel accounts record. In fact, this phrase speaks to the burden of this thesis. Though modern readers often read the Gospel accounts of the Savior's life emphasizing his deity at the expense of his humanity, by and large, those who encountered the Savior in life experienced him as a man—a remarkable, unique man, no doubt, but nevertheless, a man.[134]

In addition to the many statements and descriptions of the incarnation of Christ already examined in this passage, certainly the reality of the death of the Lord points to the genuineness of his humanity. Mortality, itself, is one of the most defining characteristics of human beings. The final measure of Christ's humanity is his death. Repeating and qualifying Jesus' death as "death on a cross," Paul brings the first half of this dramatic passage to a somber close.

Conclusion

Paul Fienberg lists several important implications related to the incarnation of Christ from this passage.[135] Among them, he emphasizes that, in light of the juxtaposition

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[132]J. Schneider, "σχῆμα, μετασχηματίζω," in vol. 7 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (1971; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 954.

[133]O'Brien, *Philippians*, 226.

[134]Note for example Matt 8:9 ("For I too am a man under authority, . . ."); 9:3 ("This man is blaspheming."); 13:54 ("Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"); Mark 2:7 ("Why does this man speak like that?"); Luke 23:2 ("We found this man misleading our nation."); 23:4, ("I find no guilt in this man."); John 4:29 ("Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did."); 5:11 ("The man who healed me."); 7:12 ("He is a good man."). See also Matt 9:8; Mark 6:2; Luke 7:8, 16; 23:14, 18, 41, 47; 24:19; John 7:15; 9:11, 16, 24, 29, 33.

[135]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 45-46.

of the "form of God" with the "form of a servant," the incarnation "consisted in the surrender of Christ's position, not his powers or prerogatives."[136] That is to say, Christ did not become less than God—giving up his divine attributes. Furthermore, he did not surrender his divine authority. Taking the position or status of a slave without rights, the Sovereign Lord voluntarily chose not to use his divine attributes for his own advantage. Nevertheless, he did not become any less divine. This interpretation is contrary to kenotic theory which posited that Christ surrendered either some of or all his divine attributes. Hawthorne also takes the kenoticists to task. Their proposal that Christ divested himself of certain divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, but retained others such as holiness, love, and righteousness, does not find support in this passage. Hawthorne explains that since this passage is most likely a hymn it should not be pressed for precise doctrinal formulations but should rather be understood in its entirety. Furthermore, the verb "to empty" is not precise enough to draw firm conclusions on its own. Instead, the context clearly argues that the "emptying" was accomplished by addition to himself what he did not have before, that is, the form of a servant, the likeness of men, and the appearance of a man.[137]

Another key implication of this passage is that the kenosis "involved the assumption of genuine humanity by Christ."[138] The multiple phrases "form of a servant," "made in the likeness of men," and "found in the appearance as a man" in this passage emphasize this fact clearly. In his genuine humanity, Christ experienced the limitations of mankind, the temptations, the discouragements, the difficulties, the pains, weaknesses, sorrow, even death. The only qualification to this identification would be that he did so without sin. The humanity that Christ added to his pre-existing deity was unfallen.

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[136]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 45.

[137]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 88.

[138]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 45.

Finally, Feinberg adds that the incarnation "required that Jesus depend on the Holy Spirit."[139] In choosing not to use his divine attributes independently of the Father's will or for his own benefit, the Son *de facto* chose to depend rather on the Holy Spirit. This implication is consistent with other statements in the New Testament.[140]

Summary of Observations

As he argues for the supremacy of Jesus Christ, the author to the Hebrews also constantly emphasizes the humanity of the Savior. As Morris points out, even in his choice of titles, the author accentuates his human nature. Morris writes, "The writer delights to use the human name 'Jesus', and almost invariably he puts it in an emphatic position. By itself (i.e. without such an addition as 'Christ') this name points us to the Man, Jesus. The emphatic position focuses attention on the reality and the importance of His true humanity."[141]

This focus on the human nature of the Messiah has a specific purpose. As described in Hebrews 2, since Jesus is the great high priest it is essential that he identifies with his people. If his humanity is diminished, then his ability to serve effectively as our high priest is compromised. His perfectly divine nature combined with his authentically human nature uniquely qualifies him for this role. Since he became like man in every respect, even partaking of the same physical nature, he can sympathize as our merciful high priest. Furthermore, he also can satisfy the demands of a righteous God through his death on mankind's behalf. Having suffered and having experienced the temptations that are "common to man," Jesus can come to the aid of all who come to him.

Chapter 4 develops this theme, again affirming that since Jesus suffered and

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[139]Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology," 46.

[140]See, for example, Matt 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14–18, Acts 10:38.

[141]Morris, *The Lord from Heaven*, 85.

was tempted, those who come to him can have confidence that he will receive them with mercy and grace. Having experienced a life which included weakness, dependence on God, tears and sorrow, obedience, and suffering, all without sin, he became the source of salvation for all who put their confidence in him. Since he was truly human, his sympathy is not limited, his suffering was authentic, and his temptation was genuine.

Paul also emphasizes Jesus' humanity, not as a condition for his role as the great high priest, but to accentuate his example as the humble Savior. Calling upon believers to prefer others actively and intentionally over themselves, Paul sets forth the example of Jesus Christ, who, though equal to God, became man. Not only did he add to himself the limitations of human nature, but he never used his divinity for his own advantage or benefit. To do so would have compromised his model of complete humility. More than taking on human nature, he took the form of a slave, giving up all rights and privileges and living in complete submission to the Father. From a humble, and even scandalous, birth to a cruel and humiliating death, Jesus' human life included pain, suffering, and want. God the Father responds to Jesus' initiative to take this role voluntarily by exalting him above all others. Believers who by faith follow the example of their human and divine Savior will likewise receive their own reward. The Father's elevation of his son does not undermine his ability to be an example. Rather his genuine humanity enhances the authenticity of the standard he sets for his followers.

Believers need to understand the humanity of Jesus Christ just as they need to understand his deity. Both the human and divine nature have important implications for the salvation, sanctification, and eventual glorification of every follower of Christ. Looking to Jesus the believer is saved just as the Israelites were healed in the desert when they looked to the bronze serpent (John 3:14-15). Gazing at the Savior changes the believer from one degree of glory to the next in the process of becoming more like Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Finally, the apostle John promises that seeing Jesus as he really is will dramatically bring this process to a close (1 John 3:1-2). John Owen wrote, "The

beholding of the glory of Christ is one of the greatest privileges and advancements that believers are capable of in this world, or that which is to come."[142] This discipline of gazing at the Savior through the lens of Scripture must take in his humanity as well as his deity. As believers who are beset with problems "common to man" grow in their understanding that Jesus the God-man faced the same common problems as a man himself, they will find encouragement to come before his throne to receive mercy and grace from one who understands. They will consider his invitation to come to him to find rest for their souls as coming from one who himself was many times weary and often labored with heavy burdens. They will know they have a friend in Jesus.

[142]John Owen, *The Glory of Christ in His Person, Office and Grace* (n.p.: Pavlik Press, 2012), 4, Kindle.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Addressing the deity and humanity of Christ demands care and should also bring trepidation to any author. However, since the thesis of this work relates to the failure of believers to see the full glory of Christ in his humanity as in his deity, this topic must be discussed. Nevertheless, this theme has led many in church history to stray from orthodoxy. Like the orthodox expression and definition of the Trinity, this subject occupied the greatest minds of the church. From the fourth to the seventh centuries, great men—theologians and church leaders—wrestled with the Scriptures to articulate and define clearly who is Jesus Christ. Some departed from the biblical understanding of the person of Christ and were exposed. Others may have been trapped by their own words or even unfairly accused. Many great names of church history, as well as some ignominious names, are attached to this period of time. However, in order to address the concern at hand—the failure of many in the church including both counselors and counselees to understand and apply the humanity of Christ—some effort is required to clarify the depth of Christ's human experience and the implications of his taking on humanity in the incarnation.

In order to appreciate the humanity of Christ, the believer must know something of the development of the doctrines concerning Christ in the early church. Such a review includes how various personalities strayed from orthodoxy as well as what the final formulation of orthodoxy established. Believers and ministers must ensure for themselves that they stay within the traditional mainstream of belief by digging a deep channel into biblical truth and building up the walls on either side. This subject is not the

place for novelty. In fact, novelty often morphs into heresy.[1] A deep riverbed and reinforced riverbanks also prevent overstatement of one's case which can also lead one to capsize. Nevertheless, concerning the person of Christ and his dual nature, great mystery remains. It will not be surprising to see there are still areas of disagreement. Therefore, some discussion of more current solutions or explanations of the dual nature of Christ and how it is manifested in the humanity of Christ must also be addressed before the application of this doctrine is seen in later chapters.

While Christians today normally do not struggle with belief in the deity of Christ or his humanity, they often fail to see the *implications* of the humanity of the Savior as clearly as they see the implications of his deity.[2] An inadequate and shallow understanding of the person of Christ robs the believer of an essential resource and catalyst of spiritual growth and edification—meditation on his glory (2 Cor 3:18). As Mark Jones states, "[Jesus'] life has a glory in it that is only appreciated to the degree that is true humanity is embraced and understood."[3] Knowing the historical development of this doctrine as well as key concepts concerning the humanity of Christ will aid both the practitioners of biblical counseling and the disciples they seek to help. Equipped with a greater appreciation of the Savior's life as the Incarnate Son of God, counselees will draw closer to and walk more intimately with the One who is indeed the friend of sinners, the Wonderful Counselor, and the sympathetic high priest.

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[1]Robert Culver cogently warns, "The names of genuine innovators throughout church history have all turned out to be the names of heretics." Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 494, Logos.

[2]Bruce Ware refers to this tendency to assume that Jesus freely performed miracles, resisted temptation, and perfectly obeyed the Father out of the resources of his divine nature and power as evangelical intuition or instinct. See Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), locs. 414, 425, 706, Kindle.

[3]Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), 51.

Counsels and Heretics: Developing a Consensus in the Early Church

Through several centuries the early church wrestled and struggled to understand, explain, and defend the nature of God and the person of Christ. Oftentimes, these battles were fought in reaction to heresies that arose. Doctrinal clarifications and confessions are occasional. They arise from need. Often the need surfaces as a result of an attack on truth. As the early church hammered out over time a clear statement on the deity and humanity of Christ, the attacks on the person of Christ tended to come on one side and then the other. Since the controversies over the Trinity often centered on the question of the deity of Christ, the Trinitarian and Christological controversies were intertwined. Paul Enns points out the back and forth extreme circumstances that led the church to define orthodoxy concerning the person of Christ. He writes,

> The Trinitarian controversy was clearly also a Christological controversy. The discussion involved not only the true deity and genuine humanity of Christ, but also the relationship of His two natures. The pendulum swung back and forth: the Docetists denied Jesus' humanity; the Ebionites denied His deity; the Arians "reduced" His deity, while the Apollinarians "reduced" His humanity; the Nestorians denied the union of the two natures, while the Eutychians emphasized only one nature.[4]

A brief survey of these controversies and their outcomes will help the pastor and counselor appreciate the effort and care that was required to come to a consensus on who Christ is. These battles lead to the great ecumenical councils that are recognized today by all branches of Christendom. These councils defined heresy just as they safeguarded truth. The key characters behind these attacks as well as the men that faithfully articulated the truth will be also briefly mentioned.[5]

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[4]Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 421, Logos.

[5]For a thorough discussion of this time in history, see appropriate sections of Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999); Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1500* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1997); Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History In Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1996); and Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2011), Kindle. Richard Norris provides a translation of a collection of crucial original writings from the key figures as well as an introduction that briefly explains the role and interaction of these characters starting with Justin Martyr and ending with the Chalcedonian Definition. Richard A. Norris, Jr., *The Christological Controversy*, Sources of Early Christian Thought, ed.

The Road to Nicaea

Before the end of the first century, attacks on the person of Christ surfaced in the church. The deity and humanity of Jesus served as a line in the sand between both Judaism and Greek philosophy and true unadulterated Christianity. As early as the late first century the Gnostic school of thought, which included among its members the Docetists, began to undermine the deity of Christ. Evidence that the dualistic thinking which Gnosticism borrowed from Greek philosophy was already infiltrating the church can be found in the pages of Scripture.[6] The Greek dualistic worldview promoted the idea that since spirit is good and matter is evil, God could not create the material world, nor could God possibly be incarnate and take a human form.[7] Docetism, a branch of Gnosticism, affirms that Christ was an emanation from the Father because flesh is inherently evil. He only appeared to be human. His deity was genuine, but his humanity was a mere phantasm.[8]

During the second century, Christianity faced an attack on a different flank. As Christianity differentiated itself from its Judaistic heritage, questions arose concerning the law, a topic often addressed in the pages of the New Testament. However, another grave concern was the nature of God. An early Jewish-Christian sect known as Ebionism, in an effort to safeguard monotheism, denied the deity of Christ.[9] As the first among a long line of adoptionists,[10] the Ebionites taught that Jesus was only a man who became

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William G. Rusch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

[6]See, for instance, 1 John 4:1-3.

[7]See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 2:339, Logos; and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 2:306, Logos.

[8]According to Berkhof, some Gnostics tended to be adoptionistic, that is they believe that God came upon Jesus at his baptism, but departed prior to his crucifixion. See Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 306. Paul was already dealing with this manner of thinking about Christ when he wrote Colossians and stressed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9).

[9]Allison, *Historical Theology*, 367; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 305-6.

[10]Adoptionism is a heretical view that surfaced from time to time in the early church that essentially viewed Christ as a great man who was, at some point, typically his baptism, endued with divine

qualified to be the Messiah because of the Holy Spirit's descent upon him. Similar attacks continued until Nicaea when the doctrine of the Trinity was finally expressed in clear terms. Men like Melito of Sardis, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus served as the sentries to defend and protect the young Christian church from these outside influences.

While these external attacks from Judaism and Greek philosophy occupied the attention and energy of the apostles and the early apologists who followed soon after them, other attacks eventually began to develop from within the church. The early church suffered its first great internal doctrinal crisis leading to the need to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity. Early in the fourth century, Arius, a popular presbyter in church in the city of Alexandria, challenged the sitting bishop of Alexandria and accused him of modalism. Modalism was another ancient heresy that asserts that God manifests himself or changes into the different modes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, much like a divine transformer.[11] As the conflict between the bishop and the presbyter grew, Arius eventually denied the deity of Jesus Christ, concluding that while Jesus a supremely unique creature, he was a creature nonetheless. He and his followers were known to chant the slogan, "There was time when the Son was not."[12] This battle for orthodox theology raged a number of years until the Roman emperor Constantine felt constrained to organize the first general council of the Christian church in Nicaea in 325 for the sake of unity in his empire.

This historic meeting included 318 bishops from all parts of the Roman

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power (see Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 256, Logos.

[11]See Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 419-20. For more information on Arius, see Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 141-150.

[12]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 143-44; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 369. Jaroslav Pelikan claims that the actual watchword of the Arians was "there was a then when he did not exist" instead of "there was a time when he did not exist" in order to distinguish between the Logos and other creatures. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 196.

Empire. It occurred only a few years after Christians had suffered official persecution. After Constantine's conversion to Christianity, circumstances drastically changed for the new official religion. This reprieve allowed the church to begin to organize and articulate its beliefs, a move that was already long overdue. Neither modalism nor adoptionism had been officially condemned by the church at large, and now Arianism had become very popular. Apparently, this popularity was more due to the charisma of its promoter than the acceptance of its key tenet, that the Son is a created being.

After some wrangling the council produced the Nicene Creed which clearly articulated that the Father and the Son are of one substance or one divine nature. The bishops affirmed that the Son possesses all the essential attributes as the Father. He is "God, very God" and "begotten, not made." Though all bishops were required to sign the Nicene Creed, some did so reluctantly and without giving up their appreciation for Arius. He still enjoyed the esteem of many even though the council officially declared him a heretic. The language of the creed appeared to be clear, but enough ambiguity remained to leave the door open for later heresies and attacks.[13]

From Nicaea to Chalcedon

The road to Chalcedon where historic classical Christology was finally articulated in precise terms includes stops along the way in Constantinople and Ephesus.[14] Vague language in the Nicene creed necessitated these additional councils. Since the creed affirmed that the Father and the Son shared the same essence, some bishops who signed it found support for their own heresy of Sabellianism, a form of modalism that affirms that the Father and the Son are one in the same. The creed left

[13]For more details about the development of doctrine leading up to Nicaea and the key characters who were involved see Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Vol. 1*, 172-225.

[14]The Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451) are generally regarded as having special authority for Protestants although Constantinople III (681) also has special Christological significance because it declared monotheletism (the view that Jesus Christ had only one will) a heresy.

room for this heresy because it did not differentiate between the Father and the Son and did not mention the Holy Spirit at all.[15]

Also, in the aftermath of the Nicene council, Arius and his followers managed to influence Constantine to reinstate Arius even though it was the emperor himself who originally insisted that Arius be excommunicated. This reinstatement led to inevitable conflict with Athanasius, the current bishop of Alexandria and the champion of the deity of Christ. Soon the emperor's favor shifted, and he exiled Athanasius. This was the first of five exiles that the bishop of Alexandria endured as each new emperor came with his own doctrinal and political prejudices. Arianism managed to grow in influence. Despite much effort, subsequent emperors and bishops could not agree on suggested changes to the Nicene creed to close the door on modalism but still leave room for Arianism. During this time the universal, organized church came close to capitulation on the deity of Christ. Were it not for Athanasius's stubborn will and explicit articulation, Arianism might have won the day. In the fifty years until the next council, controversy between the two parties never stopped churning. The unsettled situation eventually prompted a new assembly of church leaders.[16]

Constantinople I. By 381 it became necessary to revise and clarify the Nicene Creed. The arguments and debates over the Trinity and the person of Christ affected the whole empire and engulfed all classes of people. This disagreement was not an ivory tower debate. Even the people of the pews entered the fray and argued among themselves. After the death of Athanasius, three Cappadocian church leaders took up the cause for orthodoxy. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa

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[15]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 162.

[16]For more detailed study of this period, including other leading characters, as well as a discussion of the legend of Athanasius see Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 40-72. See also Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Vol. 1*, 226-77.

were all close friends of Athanasius and came from the same region of the Roman Empire. In the time since Nicaea, twelve different proposals, mostly Arian, had circulated as alternatives. The Cappadocian fathers had to reaffirm and clarify the biblical truth as summarized in the Nicene creed to stop this constant barrage on the deity of Christ. They also needed to clarify the implications of the creed in order to extinguish modalism once and for all. Finally, they had to settle another issue that arose in the form of another heresy, Apollinarianism.[17]

Apollinarianism, named for its founder, sought to promote Trinitarian doctrine. However, the leader of this movement, Apollinarius, held to a tripartite composition of man that leans more heavily on the philosopher Plato than it does on the Scriptures. Often referred to in shorthand as "God in a bod" Apollinarianism taught that Jesus Christ had a human body and soul, but his spirit, that is his mind and consciousness, was replaced by the Eternal Son of God.[18] Apollinarius wanted to preserve the unity of Christ as well as his sinlessness.[19] This attempt to explain the deity of Christ became popular, but it ultimately truncated the genuine humanity of Christ by leaving Christ without a true human spirit.

In order to put to rest the questions concerning modalism and Apollinarianism as well as reaffirm the previous stance against Arianism, bishops led by the three Cappadocian fathers met again in Constantinople in 381. They expanded and clarified the Nicene Creed. Clarifications included making sufficient distinction between the Father

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[17]See Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 188-94 for a discussion of Apollinarianism. Also see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 554-56, for a good, brief discussion including diagrams of Apollinarianism as well as Nestorianism and Eutychianism which all follow in the discussion.

[18]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 189. See also Young and Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 245-60. Norris interprets Apollinarius a little differently claiming that he viewed Jesus as not having a "lacked a human intellect or rational soul" (Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 22). The main issue is that the genuine humanity of Jesus is undermined if any part of a tripartite composition is not genuinely human as Apollinarius argued.

[19]Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 306-7.

and Son in order to exclude modalism. Additions included an article about the Holy Spirit in order to round out the emphasis on Trinitarian doctrine. Even though this updated creed with its refinements was adopted fifty-six years after the original council in Nicaea, the church generally recognizes and refers to the revised text as the Nicene Creed. All branches of Christendom consider it binding.[20]

Ephesus 431. Revisions at Constantinople managed to lay the foundation for the deity of Christ and preserve the distinction of the three persons in the Godhead. However, soon controversy again erupted concerning the interrelation of the divine and human natures of the God-man Jesus Christ. One source of the conflict was the common-place practice of identifying Mary as the "Mother of God" or "God-Bearer." While this title may grate on the ears of present-day Protestants who reject the veneration of Mary by the Roman Catholic Church, its original use served to secure the deity of Christ in balance with his humanity. In short, the title emphasized that the child that Mary bore was God, but he was born as any other human child.[21]

Eventually Nestorius, the newly appointed bishop of Constantinople, drew a line in the sand and ordered church members to stop using this term in reference to Mary. He required them to use instead "mother of Christ" or "Christ-bearer." A bitter clash erupted that soon engulfed both the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire. This controversy added fuel to the already existing rivalry between Antioch and Alexandria, the respective centers of thought in the empire. These centers held differing views on hermeneutics as well as on the person of Christ. Unfortunately, this controversy, like many during this time, was tainted by politics and a quest to gain influence in the

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[20]For more information on this period of time and the leading characters involved see Young and Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 135-72.

[21]For further discussion of this period of time including the background that led to the Nestorian controversy, see Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 201-21 and Young and Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 288-97.

whole Roman Empire often through key positions of power as well as influence on the emperor.

It is important to note that the church had not yet formed and defined its understanding of Jesus Christ having two natures, divine and human, in one person. Mark Jones suggests that "theologians up to this point had in common a belief in the two natures of Christ. Their differences focused on the quality or integrity of the two natures as they related to each other in the person of Christ."[22] As bishops and church leaders developed and clarified this doctrine, they wrestled to explain the uniqueness of Christ while preserving both his deity and humanity. They, like many today, often overemphasized one nature at the expense of the other.[23] In the midst of debate, as is often the case, opponents adopted extremes and overstated their cases in their own defense while talking past their opponents. Theologians and believers today, who often tend toward taking sides on different theological questions, should learn from their mistakes. Sometimes good and faithful men simply get caught up in a swirl of controversy. This unfortunate situation appears to be the case for Nestorius. Most theologians today conclude, as Donald MacLeod states, "Nestorius was almost certainly not a Nestorian."[24] Instead, he got identified with a belief that was a caricature of his own thinking.

According to Olson, Nestorius did not seek to deny the divinity of Christ in any way. However, "The problem was that he believed so strongly in the divinity of the Logos, as Son of God, that he resisted any attribution to him of creaturely characteristics

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[22]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 45.

[23]Further complicating the matter, the language of "one person, two natures" had not yet been settled. In fact, differences in meaning and unfortunate choices of Latin words to explain the Greek terms added to poor communication. For a table laying out the Greek terms, poorly chosen Latin equivalents, and better options, see Harold Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 129.

[24]Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 182. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 374n55; and Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:401.

or experiences."[25] Again, in the interest of preserving and emphasizing the divinity of Christ, Nestorius seemed to mitigate his humanity. On the other hand, Nestorius did not deny the virgin birth but taught that from his conception the human Jesus was intimately associated with the Eternal Son. Nestorius simply could not shake the dualistic Christology which had up to that time influenced the thinking of the East. He thought of divinity and humanity as mutually exclusive entities and ultimately affirmed that Jesus Christ was two persons. Olson summarizes, "The Son of God never actually enters into human existence. The human person in the Nestorian conjunction remains not only distinct in nature but also a different person from the Son of God."[26] In short, the heresy of Nestorianism divides Christ into two distinct co-existing persons, divine and human, conjoined in the Incarnation. Nestorius preserved this division so that he could attribute glory and divine power to the divine person while attributing weakness, suffering, limitation, and mortality to the human person.[27]

The Council of Ephesus in 431 nearly led to the split of the church as the West and East held competing, separate meetings. Ultimately the participants got together, avoided schism, and reaffirmed the Nicene creed while also condemning the heresies of Apollinarianism and Nestorianism. Led by Cyril of Alexandria[28] and John of Antioch, who were under great pressure by the emperor, the bishops and church leaders meeting in Ephesus forged a compromise. This compromise proved only to be a stop-gap until the relationship of the deity and humanity of Christ could be more precisely defined.

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[25]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 213.

[26]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 216.

[27]In maintaining this strict division, Nestorius denied a key doctrine that helps explain the two natures of Christ, the *communicatio idiomatum* or 'the communication of attributes.' This doctrine will be discussed later under "Key Definitions and Concepts in Christology." See Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 219; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 563.

[28]See Young and Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 298-321.

Chalcedon, 451. Before the church could arrive at what is now the classical formulation of Christology, yet another proposal to solve the relationship of the divinity and humanity arose from an elderly monk in Constantinople, Eutyches.[29] He denied the humanity of Christ, but not in the same way that Apollinarius did. Apollinarius reduced the humanity of Christ by substituting his human spirit with a divine one. Eutyches viewed the humanity of Christ as being engulfed in such a way as to be rendered insignificant much the way a comparably infinite ocean would swallow a drop of blood. Divine attributes, unlimited by definition, would permeate and overwhelm human attributes. This view resulted in creating a Christ that was neither truly human or truly divine, but some third nature, unique and without analogy.

This position, which contradicted the Nicene creed was affirmed at a council in Ephesus in 449 which came to be known as the "Robber Synod." The meeting earned this name because it was held without cooperation between the parties. After opposing voices were shut down and expelled from the meeting, Eutyches's views were approved. This typifies the political posturing, ecclesiological intrigue, and magisterial manipulation that characterized the wrangling between rival parties at this time. Shockingly, the opposing figures even resorted to physical violence to accomplish their ends. Ultimately, the Bishop of Rome, Leo I, stepped in to reverse the decisions of the Robber Synod which had affirmed Eutychianism. This move led to conflict with the Emperor Theodosius II, who supported the decisions of this second Ephesian council.

At this same time, the Roman Empire itself was beginning to disintegrate into two parts. Dissatisfied with Ephesus II and the lack of censure by the emperor of the violent tactics used there, the church in the West under Leo's leadership organized a general church council for the first time without the emperor's support. As the meetings were being organized, the emperor suddenly died in an accident. Such circumstances

[29]See Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 226-27.

allowed the meeting to proceed without political interference. A document written by Leo and known as *Leo's Tome* was at the center of the controversy in Ephesus II. In preparation for the next council, Leo had this document circulated throughout the whole Empire.

In the fall of AD 451, five hundred bishops and numerous state officials including the new Empress Pulcheria assembled in Chalcedon. This historic meeting began poorly and nearly broke out again in violence. Nevertheless, the assembly managed to reverse the decisions made two years prior in the Robber Synod. Eventually the leaders reinstated those who had been unfairly exiled. Finally, those parties responsible for the previous bullying and violence were exiled. The attendees, then, set about clarifying and articulating the Biblical truth about Christ in a way that satisfied both Antioch in East and Alexandria in the West. As Olson states, "The truth on both sides had to be preserved and expressed, while the extremes of both had to be avoided and even excluded."[30] The epistle circulated earlier by Leo along with the original documents of Ephesus I (432) proved to be crucial in establishing a unified position.

The meeting in Chalcedon produced a new creed often referred to as the Chalcedon Definition. It affirms clearly both the humanity and deity of Christ with the words "truly God and truly man" and also incorporated the title "God-bearer" for the Virgin Mary. It specifies that Jesus is one person in two natures. Most importantly the definition built four fences by stating that the Christ is "made known in two natures *without confusion, without change, without division, without separation*." These fences surround, "the mystery of the hypostatic union—Christ's two full and complete natures in one person."[31] The first two phrases eliminate the heresies that create a unique third nature that is a hybrid between deity and humanity such as Eutychianism and

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[30]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 231.

[31]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 234.

monophysitism. The last two phrases secure the unity of the person of Christ and eliminate the heresy of Nestorianism which maintains a sharp distinction in the person of Christ consisting of two completely different persons.

This formulation did not satisfy all parties. Churches in Syria and further east refused to accept its wording along with churches in Egypt. Nevertheless, this definition brings to culmination centuries of discussion and often contentious dialogue. It has stood the test of time as the classic formulation of orthodox Christology. As will be seen, there is still much discussion within the constraints of Chalcedon. However, the vast majority of Christendom accepts this definition. Chalcedon is the last of the councils that are universally recognized. The only significant refinement took place over two hundred years later when the question of whether Christ had one will or two wills was taken up in Constantinople in 681.[32]

As Stephen Wellum states "Chalcedon sets the parameters and puts in place the guardrails by which Christological discussion now takes place, yet it is not the final statement and, in fact it spurs us on to further reflection within its boundaries. Ultimately it is only Scripture that can serve as our final authority, but we neglect the Chalcedonian Definition at our peril."[33] Today's theologians, preachers, and ministers should exercise great care to respect these boundary stones. Counselors and counselees alike can find great encouragement from a clearer understanding of the sovereignty and power seen in the *God*-man, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the same God-*man* provides great comfort to believers through his compassion for suffering sinners beset with temptation. Today's

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[32]Apart from being a straightforward biblical issue in light of Christ's statement "Not my will, but your will be done" (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35-36; Luke 22:41-42), this is an important philosophical issue. Some modern theologians want to locate the will in the person rather than in the nature leaving the Eternal Son with one will instead of two. Rejection of two wills is a key component of modern kenotic theory which states that the Eternal Son gave up some qualities of deity either ontologically or functionally. For further explanation, see Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, ed. John S. Feinberg, The Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), loc. 10135-93, Kindle.

[33]Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 8169.

believer dares not overemphasis or neglect either of Christ's natures. To do so will undermine his sanctification. Great men fought long and hard to protect and expose the glory of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. Contemplation of both allows the follower of Christ to be transformed into his image.

Chalcedon Christianity and Onward

Almost all Christian traditions today recognize that Chalcedon set the boundaries of Christological orthodoxy. The Chalcedon Definition with its four exclusions, "without confusion, change, division, or separation" provides a corral where believers can remain within the traditional, biblical definition of who Christ is. As the church progressed, discussions and debate became less about heresy or divisions between those who denied the faith and those who kept it, and more about differences of opinion about Christ within the church.[34] Chalcedon settled the question that the Son of God had two natures in one person. Within the four parameters of her definition, unity and distinction are maintained. Nevertheless, Chalcedon did not settle the question of exactly *how* two natures can exist in one person. Harold Brown advises restraint in this endeavor. As the church and her leaders wrestled with answers to the question of "How?" Brown points out that "the more complete they were, the more problems they raised."[35]

All existing churches did not universally accept Chalcedon. In different parts of the Roman Empire and outside her borders discussion and criticism continued. Eventually, after more than two hundred years another council in Constantinople (681) reaffirmed the Chalcedonian creed.

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[34]Brown, *Heresies*, 158. Brown seems to downplay some of the key differences between Nicaea and Chalcedon with his statement, "But as we move into the Christological controversies, we begin to encounter heresies that do not appear so capable of causing fatal injury to Christendom" (158). While the debates following Chalcedon might have been more intramural dividing Christians from Christians rather than Christians from heretics, it is hard to see how a heresy is not fatal. Certainly later heresies did not pose the threat that Arianism or Gnosticism posed, but had they become mainstream they would have had disastrous results.

[35]Brown, *Heresies*, 159.

The council in Constantinople dealt with another question concerning the Incarnate Son of God. This question, and how it is answered, provides an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of careful thought about the humanity and deity of Christ. Brown contends, like Guthrie,[36] that contemporary Christians often shortchange the humanity of Christ in their thinking. He states, "Much modern twentieth-century conservative Protestantism is implicitly Apollinarian because while it ringingly confesses the deity of Christ, it finds it hard to think that he was really a man."[37]

One of the key questions addressed at Constantinople in 681 was this, "Did Christ have two wills or one?"[38] Clearly Scripture gives evidence of the two will position where the human will of Christ comes in conflict with the divine will. The divine will of the Son of God must be in unison with the will of the Father. Therefore, when Jesus says, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42; Matt 26:39), the Father's will and the Son's *divine* will must differ from Jesus' human will. Certainly, the cross presented a genuine dilemma to Jesus, the God-man. To be crushed by the Father for the sins of his people was not a question about which Jesus did not have deep, even conflicted, emotions. He dreaded the cross with all its implications. He despised the

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[36]See chap. 1.

[37]Brown, *Heresies*, 170.

[38]The two will view is referred to as the duothelite position while the one will view is called monothelite position. The monothelite position, in the interest of preserving the unity of the person of Christ, placed the will in the one person. The duothelite position in the interest of maintaining fidelity to the Scriptures kept the wills in the realm of the natures. The monothelite position was declared heretical in 681 in Constantinople. Discussion of this controversy has resurfaced more recently as it relates to some theologians who promote the doctrine of the Eternal Submission of the Son. The argument against eternal submission relates to the two will/one will debate. If the Son was always submissive to the Father, then the Son has his own divine will distinct from the Father's (because submission implies submission of one's will). This submission by the Son results in two wills within the Godhead which traditionally has been understood to be united in one divine will with the will being centered in the divine nature and not in the three distinct persons. It was not until the Eternal Son took on a human nature with a human will that submission became necessary. Eternal submission is different than eternal generation, a concept referenced both in the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedon Definition. For a description of eternal generation, see Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 92-94; and John F. MacArthur Jr. and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 191, 206-8. The later work briefly explains how eternal submission undermines the doctrine of the simplicity of the Trinity and the submission of the Son to the Father in the economy of redemption and during the time of the Incarnation. See discussion on 207-8, and specifically 207n58.

shame associated with it (Heb 12:2). He did not proceed skipping and singing to Gethsemane. Had there been another option, no doubt, he would have taken it. Clearly the human will of Jesus' human nature conflicted with his own divine will in his divine nature which could be no different than the Father's.[39]

This question provides an occasion to consider the two natures of Christ. It leads to other questions as well. How do two natures with two wills interact within one person? How can Jesus be divine and yet not know the day of his return? How can a babe uphold the universe by the power of his word? How can a God-man sympathize with the everyday "common to man" problems of struggling sinners? The theologian, pastor, and biblical counselor must grapple with these questions. They are not esoteric, abstract, or impractical. Rather, these questions are important because wrong answers or conceptions can drift toward heresy. Furthermore, many contemporary believers remain confused. Some have wrongly concluded, at the very least implicitly, that Jesus simply does not sympathize with frustrated sinners. He cannot identify with the problems they face every day. If he cannot identify with sinners, then sinners cannot identify with him. Answers do not come easy to such questions. Some element of mystery will always remain. Certainly, theologians continue to debate how to answer them. Nevertheless, pastors and counselors need to contemplate them carefully.

Believers must see the full glory of Christ in order to transform into his likeness. When the counselor helps the counselee see the humanity of Christ, the counselee will more likely drawn near to Christ. Furthermore, counseling, possibly more than any other area of ministry, faces the danger of creating dependency on the counselor—a kind of surrogacy for Christ himself. Pointing counselees to the humanity of Christ will encourage spiritual maturity and dependence on the Savior who lived with

[39]Jesus' constant referral to his submission to the Father's will in the Gospel of John further support this view (see John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

the same resources as believers: belief in the promises of God and dependence on the Spirit.[40] As followers of Christ themselves grow and walk with a Savior who sympathizes, they also, as sinners conforming to Christ, will be able to help other sinners conform to Christ. Mark Jones suggests that failure to understand how the two natures of Christ relate can compromise spiritual growth. He writes, "The problem that many of us have with the person of Christ is rather simple but also may be quite detrimental to our Christian walk: we fail adequately to understand what it means for him to be divine and human in one person."[41]

In order to see the full glory of Christ and consequently draw near to him and be conformed to him, believers must shake off their quasi-Apollinarianism and even their *de facto* Docetism.[42] Within the constraints of Chalcedon, they must understand who the Son of God is. Counselors must help them. First, counselors need to understand some key definitions to key concepts in Christology. Secondly, ministers of soul-care need to be familiar with the insufficient solutions to this question as well as better solutions to this dilemma. This understanding will lay the foundation for the application of this doctrine in subsequent chapters.

Key Definitions and Concepts in Christology

The Chalcedon definition sought to delineate the parameters of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ in one person. *Hypostasis* is the Greek word for

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[40]The believer also has the fellowship of the saints to aid them in their sanctification. While Jesus certainly had his disciples alongside him, it is hard to escape the conclusion that they consistently disappointed him. Even in this disappointment, the New Testament believers can find some level of comfort as they struggle with depending on other believers who sometimes let them down.

[41]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 35.

[42]Both of these heresies compromised Jesus' humanity to some degree. Apollinarianism is the idea that Jesus was divine but simply occupied a human body while Docetism denied that divinity can be fully human with all its limitations.

"substance" or "nature."[43] Therefore, the hypostatic union refers to "the union of Jesus' divine and human natures in one person, without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation."[44] The framers of the Chalcedon Definition wrote this formulation into their statement.

In order to explain some curiosities of language that arise when speaking of the Incarnate Son, theologians came up with another concept that explains statements like: "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28) or "according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all" (Rom 9:5). These two references along with many others place divine attributes or names alongside human attributes or names. How can God have blood? How can Christ have a human body of flesh and be God over all? This concept has been labelled the communication of properties or attributes.[45] In short, this concept explains how the attributes or characteristics of one nature of the Incarnate Son, his deity or humanity, can be properly attributed to his person. In other words, what is true of either of Jesus' natures is also true of him as an individual. Each nature retains its own distinct characteristics, but these characteristics can be used to describe the one historical person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Incarnate Son of God. Thus, Paul can speak of the deity Christ and his own blood in one statement. He is not embarrassed to say that Christ came according to the flesh (human attribute) and that he is, at the same time, "God over all."[46] This concept allows for the two natures of Christ to exist without

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[43]MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 931.

[44]MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 931.

[45]This concept is often referred to with the Latin phrase *communicatio idiomatum.* For a discussion, see MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 265-67 and MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 193ff.

[46]Lutherans took the communication of attributes one step further and allowed for the characteristics of one nature to be attributed to another nature. This step was necessary to reconcile their view of the Lord's supper. The omnipresence of Christ (divine attribute) is attributed to the body of Christ (human attribute). Thus the presence of Christ can be carried in the bread and wine in all places. For a critique of this view of attributing characteristics from one nature to the other nature (instead of to the one person), see MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 196-98.

blending to make a new third nature—the error of Eutychianism—and avoids the problem of the two natures simply lying juxtaposed without interaction or contact in the one person—the error of Nestorianism.[47]

While pastors and counselors will likely find a helpful discussion of the communication of attributes in most systematic theologies, a second important concept for understanding the two natures of Christ requires further research. It is related to the question of how the infant child Jesus Christ could, for instance, continue his work of holding all things in the universe together (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3). In the discussion that follows, various proposals to answer this question will be examined. However, the traditional explanation has been referred to as the *extra* or the *extra Calvinisticum*.[48] In other words, the Eternal Son of God, even after becoming man, was united with human nature to form one man, but he was not restricted to that human nature. This idea states that despite the incarnation, the Son retains and continues to exercise all his divine attributes. Wellum explains, "since the Son now subsists in two natures, *he* is not completely circumscribed by the limits of his human nature; the Son is able to live a divine life *outside* (*extra*) his human nature while simultaneously living a fully human life in his human nature."[49]

In a mystery beyond total human comprehension, then, the two natures of Christ are said to interpenetrate one another. The traditional theological term for this interpenetration is *perichoresis*. This term was applied originally to the relationship of the persons of the Trinity, but also came to be a useful explanation of the relationship of the

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[47]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 8083.

[48]Even though this concept is attributed to Calvin by the Lutherans in derision as a result of his debates with the Lutherans over the Lord's Supper, it predates Calvin. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, trans. Henry Beverage (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software), xiii:4, Logos; and Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 171, Logos. A survey of some of the standard and more recently published systematic theologies produces almost no discussion of this concept.

[49]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 8803, italics in the original.

two natures of Christ. Oliver Crisp elucidates: "the two natures of Christ and the persons of the Trinity somehow interpenetrate one another, yet without confusion of substance or commingling of natures."[50] In the hypostatic union, therefore, the two natures of Christ join without comingling in an interpenetration that does not restrict the divine nature to the limits of the human nature, but does not violate the limitations of the human nature.[51]

Insufficient Explanations:
Kenotic Theories

For some theologians this explanation that includes *perichoresis*, the *extra*, and the communication of attributes does not do justice to the humanity of Christ. Furthermore, it ultimately violates Jesus' ability to identify with the sinners he came to save. In an effort to avoid what was believed to be a compromise in his compassion and identification, theologians in the mid–nineteenth century began to formulate what is now referred to as kenotic theory.[52] Eventually two schools of thought developed, a stronger ontological kenotic theory and a weaker functional kenotic theory. Oliver Crisp delineates the distinction that both of these parties have in contrast to the traditional view of the incarnation. He writes, "those views of the Incarnation which state that the Word somehow empties himself of—or abstains from the use of all of the powers of—one or more of his divine attributes, either functionally or ontologically"[53] qualify as kenotic theory.

He goes on to further define and differentiate between the two camps within this school of thought. The stronger ontological view of kenosis claims that "Christ

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[50]Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*: *The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), loc. 94, Kindle.

[51]For a discussion of other important terms such as *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*, see Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, locs. 8427-8612, 11708-38, and 8627.

[52]Kenotic comes from the Greek word κενόω which means "to empty" found in Philippians 2:7. See chapter 2.

[53]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 1234.

actually did not have certain divine properties during his earthly sojourn. That is, the second person of the Trinity relinquishes certain divine properties for the duration of the Incarnation, such that he was ignorant, powerless and perhaps even spatially limited to the body of the Christ for that period."[54] The milder version has been labelled the functional view of kenosis. This view affirms that in the Incarnation:

> The second person of the Trinity did not abdicate any of his responsibilities or attributes, but merely restricted the exercise of certain of his attributes, such as his power and knowledge, for the period he was incarnate. On this view, the divine nature of Christ retained its omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and so forth, but the second person of the Trinity ensured that he did not exercise any of these attributes for the duration of the Incarnation.[55]

Both Wellum and Crisp point out the problems with these two views.[56] In trying to affirm more certainly the humanity of Christ, they diminish his deity for the period of the Incarnation.[57] They create an unnecessary discontinuity in the divine nature of the Eternal Son by postulating that certain divine attributes are given up, or, at the very least, are not functional.[58] Furthermore, they deny the traditional understanding of the existence of the *extra* which allows for the deity of Christ to remain fully intact without interruption.[59] Finally, most proponents of this theory redefine "person" by making it the

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[54]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 1237.

[55]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 1408.

[56]Obviously the functional kenotic party does not go to the extreme of the ontological version of this view. As will be discussed presently, one particular proponent of this view has a lot to offer in suggesting how the two natures work together. However, in affirming that divine attributes are latent rather than abandoned by the Son there is still an unnecessary violation of the deity of the second person of the Trinity for the time of the Incarnation.

[57]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 9738.

[58]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 9760. The distinction that is being made here is that all of Christ's divine attributes were fully functional during the incarnation *in his divine nature*. That is to say that Christ was both simultaneously omniscient and limited in human knowledge in his divine and human nature respectively. The popular explanation that Christ voluntarily gave up the independent use of his divine attributes is insufficient if it is not specified that this denial applies to his human nature. If the existence of the *extra* is ignored, then the deity of Christ is to some degree undermined and the mystery of the hypostasis is lessened. It must be remembered that Jesus experienced full humanity in his human nature without being less than divine in his divine nature.

[59]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 9769; and Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 1430.

center of the will instead of the "nature." Therefore, in large part, they take the one will view of Christ which was denounced in Constantinople III in 681.[60]

This view of the Incarnation requires that the second person of the Trinity take some form of a leave of absence either from some or all his divine attributes (ontological) or from the exercise of his divine attributes (functional). In both cases, the Son would be required to delegate his normal divine duties such as upholding the universe to another member of the Trinity. Nothing in the Scriptures indicates that such an arrangement existed at any point in history including the Incarnation. The negligence or denial of the *extra* simply results in too much of a disruption in the divine work of the Eternal Son. MacLeod explains,

> The New Testament makes clear that Christ is the One who sustains all things (Heb. 1:3) and the One in whom all things hold together (Col. 1:17). Apart from him, the universe has neither Preserver nor Governor; and apart from omniscience and omnipotence its preservation and government are beyond him. Any form of kenoticism which involves the idea of a depotentiated *Logos* ('one who had no power which a perfect manhood could not mediate') would be fatal to the Lord's competence to carry out his cosmic functions.[61]

Therefore, kenoticism simply gives up too much when it makes the kenosis of the Lord Jesus in Philippians 2 is truly an "emptying" or a "surrendering" of attributes in essence or function. As explained above, the interpretation that the kenosis is an "emptying through addition" of a human nature and the taking on the form of a slave without rights or privileges more faithfully represents the meaning of the passage.

Rather than viewing the Eternal Son as taking leave of his responsibilities or "emptying himself" functionally or ontologically a better theological explanation of the condition of the Eternal Son during the Incarnation as described in Philippians 2 would be concealment or *krypsis*.[62] Wellum explains, "Philippians 2 and the entire New

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[60]Wellum, *God, the Son Incarnate*, loc. 10185.

[61]MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 209.

[62]The reader will remember from chap. 2 that the verb "to empty" does not have an object therefore there is no clarification of what the Lord emptied himself of. Furthermore, this verb is typically used metaphorically meaning "to make empty or void or of no value." The additional qualifying phrases

Testament speak more of *krypsis*, i.e., hiddenness or veiledness. This is not to say that the incarnation was a mere 'hiddenness.' It was the real addition of a human nature, but it was not the reduction or renunciation of his deity."[63] In the words of Calvin "Christ, indeed, could not divest himself of Godhead; but he kept it concealed for a time, that it might not be seen, under the weakness of the flesh. Hence he laid aside his glory in the view of men, not by lessening it, but by concealing it."[64] The addition of the limits of humanity by the taking on of a human nature to his already existing divine nature resulted in the hypostatic union of two natures. The effective result was that the divine nature was hidden or veiled for the length of the Incarnation breaking through at times such as the Transfiguration and perhaps to a lesser degree at Jesus' arrest in John 18:6.[65] However, to conclude more than this qualification concedes too much and results in an essential or functional change in the divine nature of the Eternal Son that the Scriptures do not affirm.

An Improved Solution: Hawthorne's Emphasis on the Spirit

Gerald Hawthorne tackled the interaction of the two natures in a significant work entitled, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus.* He systematically investigates the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' human life from his conception to his death. His work gives great insight and is a great blessing to the church and anyone wanting to understand the life and person of Jesus Christ. He proves without question, "The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, played a most

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indicate that that concealment of divine nature, rights, and prerogative, along with accepting the limitations of a human nature support the idea of "concealment" rather than "emptying."

[63]Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 9866.

[64]John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. and ed. John Pringle (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 56–57, Logos.

[65]This is not to say that Jesus did not claim to be divine. He certainly did. He often demonstrates an awareness of his unique relationship with the Father and his own divinity. This is especially pronounced in the Gospel of John (cf. the various "I AM" statements as well as John 5:17, 21; 8:58; 10:17-18, 30; 20:28).

significant and extremely important role in the life of Jesus, in every part and at every phase of his life."[66] For Hawthorne, it was the Spirit's ministry that, to a large degree, answers how the two natures of Jesus related to each other. He concludes, "Jesus was aided in all phases of his living (and dying) by the wonderful gift of the Father to him, a gift which he gratefully accepted and acknowledged, and whose promptings he always obeyed—the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit which filled him, certainly from his baptism onward, and no doubt before as well."[67]

According to Hawthorne, the Spirit's presence and power enabled Jesus to face intense suffering as well as intense temptation without sin. The Spirit enabled the human Jesus Christ to overcome normal human limitations. Certainly, Jesus is unique in his humanity, Hawthorne makes this emphasis very clear throughout his book.[68] However, Hawthorne does seem to indicate that the fullness of the Spirit apparent in Jesus life offers the best illustration of Jesus' works.

To compare, for instance, other supernatural works by other men of God, one might consider the prophet Isaiah or the evangelist Philip. When Isaiah identifies the name of the Persian king Cyrus before he was born and identifies what Cyrus would do, interpreters do not attribute to Isaiah omniscience. When Philip transports from the presence of the Ethiopian eunuch to Azotus, Luke explicitly states that "the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away" (Acts 8:39). Though Jesus was certainly more than a prophet and greater than the evangelist, could not the Holy Spirit enable Jesus, the God-man, to do similar supernatural acts?[69] Hawthorne's work emphatically answers, "Yes!" It is not

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[66]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 233.

[67]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 230.

[68]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 36-46, 219.

[69]Just as Hawthorne explicitly states that Jesus is unique from other Spirit-indwelt believers, he also explicitly states that Jesus is more than just a prophet (Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 37 and 168).

necessary to assume that Jesus in his earthly life shifted back and forth between humanity and deity as needed. Instead, Jesus in his human nature depended on the Spirit to live his life and carry out the mission that he accepted from the Father.

Hawthorne provides scriptural support for his position. Some verses specifically state that Jesus performed deeds in the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew for instance applies Isaiah 42:1-4 to Jesus' ministry. God's servant, the Messiah, carried out his ministry with the prerequisite that "I have put my Spirit upon him." This prophecy agrees with the earlier prophecy of Isaiah 11:2: "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." Jesus himself admits that he cast out demons by the Spirit of God in Matthew 12:28.[70] Peter also attributes the power of the Holy Spirit to the ministry of Jesus. He summarizes the ministry of Jesus with the words, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).[71]

Hawthorne's explanation does not place him among those who believe that Jesus set aside his divine powers or prerogatives.[72] Jesus did not depend on the Holy Spirit to the degree that he needed the Holy Spirit's permission to do supernatural acts. Instead, while divine power was latent in Jesus Christ, he did not use it independently of the Father's will.[73] Hawthorne follows John Walvoord who posits, "It would seem that

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[70]For a discussion of this text along with the prophecies by Isaiah, see also Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 496-501.

[71]Examples of Jesus carrying out his ministry in the power of the Spirit can be found in the following verses: Luke 4:1, 14; 10:21; John 1:31-32; 3:34; 7:37-39; 20:22.

[72]However, it should be noted that Hawthorne does quote favorably and identify with those who promote functional kenotic theory, especially Vincent Taylor. See Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 207-19. He, furthermore, does seem to argue for two consciousnesses rather than two wills (*The Presence & the Power*, 214).

[73]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 218.

Christ chose to perform miracles in the power of the Spirit rather than he had no alternative."[74]

Hawthorne certainly does a service to those who desire to understand clearly the humanity and limitations of Jesus Christ. His work reminds the believer that indeed Jesus availed and depended on the same resources as believers today. He places an appropriate emphasis on the Holy Spirit, one of the resources that the Father provides to Christians today. Hawthorne writes, "In answer to the question of how Jesus differed from other people who depended upon the Spirit for the *extra* in their lives, it is possible to answer that in terms of his humanness it differed in essentially no way."[75]

Nevertheless, Hawthorne's work does have some weaknesses. He fails to explain how his view does not to some degree mitigate the deity of Christ. While it might appear that Hawthorne in the previous quote is breaching the subject of the *extra Calvinisticum*, he simply refers to the dependence of Jesus and believers for supernatural power. His failure to address the question of how the divine nature continues to function in the Eternal Son's on-going divine responsibilities leaves the impression that Jesus abdicated such functions. Furthermore, Hawthorne identifies with the mild form of functional kenotic theory. In specifics he simply presses his case too far. For instance, he states, "God the Son, who became flesh in Jesus, became a real human being, and as such he *needed* the Spirit's power to lift him out of his human restrictions, to carry him beyond his human limitations, and to enable him to do the seeming impossible."[76] This statement seems to contradict others that Hawthorne approves such as Walvoord's above that states that this decision was the choice of the Eternal Son and not the only alternative. While it is true that Jesus, in his human nature, had access to the same resources that believers

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[74]John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 98.

[75]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 219. Emphasis in original.

[76]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 219. Emphasis in original.

today have—belief in the promise of God and dependence on the Spirit of God—the fact that Jesus is outside of all categories should keep interpreters from dictating what Jesus needed or did not need as the Son of God.

Hawthorne even carries his conclusion to unnecessary extremes. At one point he addresses the question of whether Christ could have sinned. Was he impeccable? He suggests that though Christ was impeccable, that is unable to sin, he was possibly not aware of it.[77] This suggestion is difficult to reconcile. How could theologians today have insight into Christ, that he could not have himself? Surely one who is full of the Spirit without measure would have more insight and not less than today's interpreters. Finally, Hawthorne clearly agrees with the position that the person of Christ only had one will when he critiques Benjamin Warfield's defense of two wills of the person of Christ.[78] Rejection of the two will position either mitigates the temptation of Jesus, which undermines Hawthorne's whole thesis, or creates multiple wills within the Trinity resulting in unnecessary and insurmountable dissonance in Trinitarian theology. The church recognized this inconsistency in the seventh century when it condemned monothelitism.

Despite these weaknesses, Hawthorne does challenge his readers to consider both the depth and breadth of the Spirit's ministry in the life of Jesus. It is not enough to conclude that Jesus shifted between his divine and human natures as necessary during his

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[77]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 209. The question of impeccability (Christ could not sin) and peccability (Christ could sin) is yet another aspect of the person of Christ that falls beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is appropriate to acknowledge that if one's conclusion leads one to determine that Christ's temptations were any less real or intense then one has come to an unbiblical conclusion and possible is asking an illegitimate question. See Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus,* loc. 1230.

[78]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 214. Wellum explains the importance and implications of the duothelite (two will position) to the full humanity of Christ (to be human is to have the ability to make human choices), to soteriology (for the salvific obedience of the Son to be genuine he must have a human will), for Trinitarian understanding (the divine will must exist in the nature of God not in the three individual persons), and for faithfulness to the Scriptures which speak of Jesus' human will contra the Father's divine will in the Garden, as well as the Son's will contra the Father's will in the Gospel of John as well as references to Jesus' divine will in passages such as Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34; and John 5:21 (Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 8928-9147).

time on the earth. Such a conclusion leaves the believer without a Savior who can sympathize or understand. Jesus' dependence on the Spirit, as described by Hawthorne, certainly provides a paradigm for the follower of Christ to walk as he walked.

A Clearer Option: Wellum's Filial Dependence

While recognizing the strengths of Hawthorne's Spirit Christology, Stephen Wellum suggests that filial dependence represents a better paradigm to explain the dual nature of Christ. He also manages to avoid the negative implications of kenotic theory and monothelitism.[79] His solution acknowledges the existence of the *extra Calvinisticum* and remains solidly within Chalcedonian Definition. While Hawthorne brings important focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Eternal Son, Wellum places an important emphasis on the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father. The Son's relationship to the Father is seen in his *filial dependence*. Wellum explains, "The incarnate Son relates to the Father in divine-filial dependence as he has from eternity. The person of Christ continues to possess and act through the divine nature as God the Son incarnate. Yet the divine Son now also possesses and acts through a truly and fully human nature that is subject to the same creaturely finitude and weakness as all other instances of human nature."[80] While it may seem overly pedantic, note that Wellum acknowledges both the *extra*—that divine existence that continues and must continue for the Eternal Son for the time of the Incarnation[81]—and the full human nature of the Christ

[79]Wellum's use of filial *dependence* refers to functional dependence and not ontological. This choice of words is distinguished from the language of eternal submission which many theologians believe leads to the position of monthelitism. That is to say, if the Son is eternally submissive to the Father (and not just for the time from the incarnation on), then the implication is that the Son eternally had a separate will from the Father which had to be submitted to the Father. This conclusion leads to an affirmation of two wills within the God-head and one will of Christ. By using *dependence* instead of submission, Wellum differentiates himself from the Eternal Submission position which many believe to violate the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. One can be dependent functionally (not ontologically) on another and still have the same will. However, submission necessarily entails a difference in two wills.

[80]Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 11640.

[81]Wellum states, "The *extra* was not intended to diminish Christ's humanity. The *extra*, rather, seeks to confess and preserve the integrity of Christ's full humanity. From conception on, the Son humbled

with its limitations. One's interpretation must hold both in balance. Wellum also wisely avoids the implications of eternal submission which lead to the one-will view of the Son which was condemned in 681. This filial dependence is an aspect of the relationship between the Father and the Son seen especially in the Gospel of John. Wellum further explains,

> As the Son of God, he is the one through whom the Father by the Spirit created all things; and he, in relation to the Father and the Spirit, is the one who continues to sustain and govern all things even in his incarnation. And the same Son of God also lives in absolute dependence upon God as a man. . . . During his earthly incarnate works, the Son could do only what he saw his Father doing; Christ was a man directly and strictly under the authority of God the Father. Yet this position-relation was not new; the Son has always depended upon the personal priority of the Father.[82]

The man Jesus Christ still lives out his human existence in dependence on the Father by the Spirit. He refrains from any independent use of his divine attributes when it is the Father's will to do so in order to completely identify with mankind as a faithful high priest. He could at any point make use of his divine nature to make his human existence easier, but it was not the Father's will, and the Son always obeyed the Father. While he never abandoned or delegated his divine responsibilities, neither did he ever take advantage of his divine nature to benefit himself or make his life or mission easier. In this way, he did not fail to experience fully humanity in all its limitations, humiliations, and temptations.

How exactly did Jesus as a human perform miracles or know things beyond limited human knowledge. Herein is great and unsolvable mystery. The Scriptures do not tell us in every instance. Certainly, he did great miracles and supernatural deeds in the power of the Spirit. The Scriptures are clear on this point. However, there are times when

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himself by taking on a human nature and he did not override its limitation" (*God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 11835).

[82]Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 11648-55. See, for example, John 5:16, 19; 7:16, 28; 8:16, 26, 28, 38, 40; 10:17; 14:31; 17:2, 24.

Jesus could not do miracles as mentioned in Mark 6:5. In fact, on several occasions he sought information with questions.[83] At times Jesus seemed almost passive when a miracle took place. For instance, of the woman suffering with the chronic discharge of blood, Jesus "perceived in himself that power had gone out from him." (Mark 5:30). Most times, however, Jesus was quite active healing with a word or a touch. In one notable example, when the disciples were unable to heal an epileptic boy possessed by a demon, he said their failure was due to lack of faith (Matt 17:14-20). Jesus did not appeal to his divine prerogative to heal the boy himself, but the power of faith. Whether the Son received knowledge and power from the Spirit to overcome his human limitations per Hawthorne[84] or whether his divine power and energies were put forth simply according to the Father's will but never for the personal benefit or interest of the son of the Son per MacLeod[85] and Wellum, it is certain that the Son of God became flesh, took on the form of a slave, took on the likeness of man, humbled himself to death on an ignoble and shameful cross. In doing so he partook of flesh and blood, became like other men in all things, was tempted in all things, and therefore, sympathizes with the sinner's weakness. Wellum summarizes, "Never once, though, did our Lord act in his own interest, because he always acted in light of who he is as the Eternal Son. Even as he faced the cross, he willingly and gladly bore our sin and deployed no resources beyond those which his Father allowed and in relation to the Spirit."[86] Jones likewise maintains this balance between dependence on the Father and empowerment by the Spirit. He states, "[Jesus]

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[83]See Mark 5:30; 9:21; John 11:34. Some interpreters suggest that in these cases Jesus was not seeking information that he did not have, but that he was using the situation to instruct his audience and the questions served this instructional purpose. However, the plain reading of the text seems to indicate that Jesus sincerely sought information.

[84]Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power*, 219.

[85]MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 220.

[86]Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, loc. 11118. See also Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 1509-13.

could have depended on his own inherent 'divine' resources, but instead he depended upon the will of the Father, who gave to him the Spirit as he needed."[87]

Conclusion

Regardless of how these questions are answered, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus experienced a full human life. Whatever conclusion the theologian, preacher, counselor, or counselee makes concerning the two natures of Christ and how they relate, any diminishing of Christ's full experience of humanity misinterprets Jesus Christ. If one's conception of Christ mitigates his ability to sympathize with believers, the intensity of his temptations, or the extremity of his suffering, then one does not understand who Jesus Christ really is. Ware summarizes,

> Although Jesus was the God-man such that he possessed a fully divine as well as fully human nature, it seems clear from the study we've undertaken to conclude that the bulk of Jesus' day-to-day living occurred as he fulfilled his calling, obeyed the Father, resisted temptation, and performed his confirmatory miracles, fundamentally as a man empowered by the Spirit. He lived his life as one of us. He accepted the limitations of his humanity and relied upon the guidance the Father would give him and the power the Spirit would provide him to live day by day in perfect obedience to the Father.[88]

Certainly, Jesus is God, very God. Concerning his deity, there is no major debate within the evangelical church. He is the Eternal Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the Sovereign Lord, and the great I AM. Because he is God, the sinner can turn to him in faith knowing that he sees all, knows all, and all power belongs to him.

Furthermore, he is the friend of sinners. He has walked where sinners walk. He has faced the "common to man" everyday problems that his people face. He sympathizes. He understands. He experienced what 'everyman' experiences with the same resources that are available to the child of God. Repentant sinners can draw near to him with

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[87]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 59.

[88]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 617.

confidence that they will receive from him grace and mercy in their time of need.

Having examined the biblical basis and importance of the incarnation as well as the development of the doctrine of Christ and the key concepts that help believers understand the two natures of Christ and keep them in balance, the focus of this thesis now turns to the application of this doctrine to various counseling scenarios.

CHAPTER 4

A FRIEND WHO BEARS OUR GRIEF: JESUS' BURDEN AND THE BELIEVER'S BURDEN

At the end of the previous chapter, the question was raised concerning the limits of Jesus' knowledge. This topic leads to many questions. How much did Jesus know as he walked on this earth? Was he omniscient or were there things of which he was unaware? How could the omniscient, Eternal Son of God be limited in knowledge? How could Jesus the man from Nazareth know all things and yet not be aware of the day or hour of his return? These are questions that face interpreters and followers of Christ as they grapple with the two natures of the Son of God.

If the question is asked, "Did Jesus know all things in his earthly life from eternity past to eternity future?" The answer must most assuredly be, "Yes, in his *divine* nature, Jesus could not help but know all things even when he walked this earth."

On the other hand, if the question is posed, "Were there things that Jesus did not know during his time on the earth? Or were there things that Jesus had to believe by faith in God and His word?" The answer, again, would most assuredly be, "Yes, in his *human* nature there were things that Jesus did not know and had to learn." As will be discussed, Jesus acquired knowledge in his human nature just as other people. Furthermore, there were things that he did not know and things he had to entrust to the Father by faith.

Therefore, Jesus knew all things in his divine nature. At the same time, Jesus was limited in knowledge in his human nature. Both statements are true. This tension is why it is important to understand the concepts of the communication of attributes and the *extra* as described in the previous chapter. Though this statement might seem self-

contradictory, Oliver Crisp's explanation helps clarify the traditional view of this problem. He writes,

> In the Incarnation, the Word assumes human nature. He does not in any way abdicate or relinquish any of his divine prerogatives or properties, either temporarily or permanently, in this action. At every moment at which the Word is incarnate, he is also exercising his divine attributes to the full, as he was before the Incarnation. What changes at the Incarnation is the taking on of a human nature in addition to the divine nature of the Word. His human nature, as with other human natures that existed post-Fall, has the properties of being limited in power and ignorant of various things. The divine nature of Christ has no such restrictive properties. In virtue of the omnipresence of the divine nature the Word interpenetrates and indwells the human nature of Christ, but the converse is not the case. That is, the human nature of Christ retains those properties which express the limitations of the knowledge, power, etc., of his human nature, while being indwelt by the divine nature of the Word.[1]

Because deity, by definition, is limitless and humanity, in contrast, is limited, the interpenetration of Jesus' two natures must be, to a degree, asymmetrical. But this asymmetry does not violate, reduce, or undermine the humanity of Jesus Christ or his experience of genuine human nature. The distinction between the natures must be maintained.

Crisp goes on to explain that the Christ in his divinity would know everything that he would also know in his humanity. However, Christ in his humanity would not know everything that Christ would know in his divinity.[2] This explanation helps solve a difficult problem. If, as ontological and functional kenoticists claim, Jesus gave up his omniscience (ontological) or restricted his access to it (functional), how then does Jesus forget something that he knew or that he cannot help but know. The solution lies in maintaining the distinction between the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus.

The Implications of Jesus' Limited Knowledge

This question concerning the limitations of Jesus' knowledge and the fact that

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[1]Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), locs. 1499-1506, Kindle.

[2]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, loc. 2333n54.

he acquired knowledge just like others has practical implications for believers who live by faith while struggling with problems and difficulties in this world. When believers understand that Jesus acquired knowledge in his human nature the same way they do, they can appreciate how Jesus likely carried a heavy, growing burden his whole adult life. At some point, Jesus came to the realization that he would suffer the wrath of the Father in place of wicked sinners. He carried this burden for years without complaining or flagging in his obedience. He knows what it is like to be consumed with a burden and to face a dilemma that never disappears.

Many of Jesus' followers also carry heavy burdens. When a child rejects the faith of their parents, parents can become despondent. The struggles against loneliness and discontent for a Christian unmarried person can be exacerbated when health issues arise as years march on. The shock of a terminal diagnosis of her husband can paralyze a young mother facing life alone with young children.

Jesus' sympathy and example can be a great encouragement to each of these suffering saints. Gazing at the glory of the Savior, revealed in his perfect humanity and deity, and considering the struggles that he faced will draw the burdened believer into closer fellowship and deeper intimacy with a Savior who does understand their grief and who carried his own burden.

The Extent of the Incarnate Lord's Knowledge

Since Jesus is God, very God, he is omniscient in his divine nature. The Psalmist affirms that God's understanding is beyond measure or infinite.[3] Elihu, Job's

[3]Ps 147:5 states that God understanding is 'beyond measure' (ESV) or 'infinite' (NASBU). These words literally mean "to his understanding, there is no counting" These words are also used in Ps 40:12 to describe the evils surrounding the psalmist which he later says are more numerous than the hairs of his head. God's creatures (Ps 104:25) and wonders (Job 5:9) are also described as without number or 'beyond measure.' See P. P. Jensen, "מִסְפָּר," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 2:1008-9, Logos.

younger counselor, says that God is perfect in knowledge (Job 37:16). God knows the things hidden from men (Deut 29:29) as well as the secrets in a man's heart (Ps 44:21). He knows all things (1 John 3:20) and everything is an open book to him (Heb 4:13).

Stephen Charnock describes the comprehensive nature of God's knowledge of all reality, contingencies, and eventualities. He writes, "God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present, or future; whether they be things that he can do, but will never do, or whether they be things that he has done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes."[4] Since Jesus is divine, and never ceased being divine, then he never ceased to know all things. Just as through the *extra* Jesus sustained the universe even while being an infant who depended on his mother for food, Jesus also knew all things that are, were, and could be while on the earth. However, at the same time, he was a man who in his human nature was limited in his knowledge and ignorant of some information.

Nevertheless, a cursory reading of the Gospels might lead one to conclude that even in his human nature, Jesus was omniscient. Some passages give the impression that Jesus shifted in an out of omniscience when he needed. For example, numerous times the Gospel writers state that Jesus knew the thoughts of his enemies.[5] Jesus identifies Nathanael's character and activities before they met (John 1:47-51). He knew the marital background of the woman at the well (John 2:25). Furthermore, Jesus expressed on several occasions that he would die and be resurrected after three days.[6] He also told the

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[4]Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 1:417.

[5]Examples include Matt 9:4 (parallels in Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22), Matt 12:25, and Luke 9:47.

[6]This prophecy is found in several places such as Matt 20:18-20; Mark 10:33-34; and Luke 18:32-33.

disciples where they would find a donkey tied together with a colt,[7] and that they would meet a man carrying a jug of water in Jerusalem who would have a room available for his use.[8]

It is not uncommon for commentaries to conclude that the incidents just mentioned prove Jesus' divine omniscience.[9] A few examples should suffice. In reference to John 1:47 where Jesus reveals his prior knowledge of Nathanael's character, Kent Hughes comments, "Jesus' statement demonstrated omniscience."[10] Colin Kruse attributes this incident and the later statement that Jesus knew what is in the heart of man (John 2:25) to Jesus' exercise of divine powers.[11] Warren Wiersbe concurs when he writes about John 2:25: "Our Lord's accurate knowledge of the human heart is another evidence of His deity, for only God can see the inner person."[12] R. C. H. Lenski connects this verse and Mark 2:8 in his comments. He also emphasizes Jesus' limited use of his omniscience. Lenski writes, "Jesus used his omniscience in this case. . . . As his office and work required Jesus used his divine attributes; but not beyond that."[13]

A similar tendency can be observed concerning Jesus' instructions to his

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[7]See Matt 21:1-2 and the parallel passages in Mark 11:1-3 and Luke 19:29-31.

[8]See Matt 26:18-19 and the parallel passages in Mark 14:13 and Luke 22:10.

[9]These commentaries are cited not because of their exegetical and theological authority, but because of their popular nature. Such popular commentaries can influence the formation of opinion in the pew through the voice behind the pulpit and through their own wide-distribution. The following examples serve to demonstrate that the conclusion that Jesus regularly accessed his omniscience is a somewhat common explanation. Bruce Ware refers to this assumption as an "evangelical intuition" regarding Jesus deity that could result in an undervaluing of Jesus' humanity. See Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), locs. 414 and 706, Kindle.

[10]R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 51, Logos.

[11]Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 105, Logos.

[12]Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 294, Logos.

[13]R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 103, Logos.

disciples in preparation for his entrance into Jerusalem. He directs them to enter a village and bring to him a donkey which they will find tied together with a colt. Commenting on Mark's record of this incident (11:1-3), William MacDonald sees the omniscience of the Lord revealed here.[14] James Brooks sees both supernatural knowledge and supernatural power because Jesus influenced the bystanders in the village to allow the disciples to take the animal.[15] The comments of Stuart Weber on Matthew's parallel account concur with the opinion that Jesus used his divine omniscience. He writes, "Jesus now drew upon his divine omniscience to prepare for his proper entrance into the city. He sent two disciples into the village, foretelling their discovery of a donkey and her colt."[16] Even John Calvin, who defended and expounded the existence of the *extra* during the time of the Incarnation of the Son of God, writes concerning this passage, "In this way he proved his Divinity; for both to know absent matters, and to bend the hearts of men to compliance, belonged to God alone."[17]

These examples demonstrate that it is not an uncommon opinion among some commentators that Jesus, when necessary, operated freely during the time of his incarnation in the realm of his divine omniscience. Each Gospel writer does not specifically state in each instance how Jesus knew things that would otherwise be hidden from normal human knowledge. However, Luke reveals in passages like Luke 4:14 and Acts 10:38 that Jesus heavily depended on the Holy Spirit as has been already discussed. It is possible that the Holy Spirit communicated these things to the human mind of Jesus

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[14]William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1349, Logos.

[15]James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 179, Logos.

[16]Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, The Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 338, Logos.

[17]John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. and ed. William Pringle (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 449, Logos.

much in the same way a prophet might also receive insight beyond what would otherwise be known.[18]

On the other hand, a few commentators attribute some of these incidences of apparent supernatural knowledge to more natural means. For instance, when the Gospel writers indicate that Jesus knew the thoughts of his opponents, this knowledge could be attributed to extraordinarily keen insight[19] or careful attention.[20] In fact, William Hendriksen posits that Jesus' knowledge about the donkey and its colt could have been due to a prearranged agreement with the owner.[21] These interpretations show that there are other possible explanations other than Jesus made use of his divine omniscience.[22]

The reader of the New Testament must be careful not to conclude that Jesus, in his human nature, had all knowledge of all things readily available to him. His human

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[18]Stephen Wellum emphasizes that such information was directly mediated from the Father to Jesus through the Spirit and thus keeps the emphases on inter-Trinitarian cooperation. This mediation from the Father also results in a more consistent filial dependence which always characterized the Son's relationship to the Father. See Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), loc. 11116, Kindle.

[19]Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 154, Logos. Blomberg states that supernatural insight is neither demanded nor ruled out in Matt 9:4.

[20]D. A. Carson writes, "Such discernment may have been supernatural, but not necessarily so. In this situation, it would not have been difficult to surmise what the teachers of the law were whispering about." D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 222.

[21]William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 763–64, Logos. Blomberg also acknowledges this possibility (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 311). Carson also leaves this option open in Matt 26:18-19 where the Lord gives instructions to the disciples to go into Jerusalem where they will see a man carrying a pot of water who will lead them to room that could be used for the Passover (Carson, *Matthew*, 533). In fact, a man carrying a pot of water could be a perfect sign as it would be something out of the ordinary—typically women carried out such tasks—but not so completely unheard of that it would draw unnecessary attention. This possibility should not be summarily dismissed. Jesus as a sinless man would have great capacity and insight to understand prophecy and even orchestrate the events leading to his death as he followed carefully the mission that the Father entrusted to him.

[22]It might be argued that this knowledge is an instance of the communication of attributes, that is to say, what Jesus knew in his divinity is attributed to his person. However, among all the options this option would seem to compromise his experience of humanity and ability to identify with believers. An assumption of this study is that since the Gospels are describing the incarnation that their primary focus is on Jesus experience of humanity. This conclusion is again consistent with Paul's statement that he took on the form of a servant, was born in the likeness of men, and was found in human form (Phil 2:6-7). Furthermore, those who interacted with Jesus during his Incarnation observed him and referred to him as a man.

experience was complete. He took on a real human nature with real limitation. He had to depend on the same resources available to believers at all times. The fact that he is truly God did not mitigate the limitations of his human nature. The existence of his divine nature does not reduce his ability to identify with sinners. In fact, just as there are passages that seem to point to extraordinary knowledge on Jesus part, there are other passage that indicate his limitations.

The Savior's Acquisition of Knowledge

On more than one occasion the Gospel writers give evidence that Jesus had to acquire knowledge through learning or asking questions. Luke provides more information about Jesus' childhood in his account than Matthew, Mark, or John. He explains that as a child Jesus "grew, and became strong, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40)[23] and that "he increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). In fact, the verbs "grew and became strong" are the exact verbs used to describe the development of John the Baptist (Luke 1:80). Therefore, the Eternal Son's progress and development through childhood paralleled that of his cousin John's. While his development and life corresponded with other young boys in Galilee, no doubt, as a young man Jesus displayed extraordinary faithfulness. Certainly, his sinless mind demonstrated sharp spiritual acuity. This assumption is consistent with the prophecy of Isaiah. Concerning his youth and his growth in knowledge, Mark Jones comments, "Our Lord Jesus Christ was awakened 'morning by morning' to be taught by his Father (Isa 50:4-6). He "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). In fact, in John's Gospel, Jesus constantly speaks of the teaching he received from his Father (John 7:16; 8:26, 28, 38, 40)."[24]

Not only did Jesus acquire knowledge through learning, but the Gospels

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[23]The word 'filled' is the present passive participle of πληρόω indicating that Jesus was filled with wisdom from a separate source outside of himself.

[24] Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 40.

include several instances where Jesus sought information just as anyone else would. For instance, in Mark 5:30 when the woman who had been suffering for years with an incurable hemorrhage touched Jesus in the crowd, Mark writes, "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments?'" On another occasion, Jesus inquires as to the length of time that a young man has been suffering from demonic seizures (Mark 9:21). In John 11:34, Jesus asks where Lazarus has been buried. Finally, Mark also records an instance when Jesus, driven by hunger, approaches a fig tree only to find that the tree had no fruit. Mark even comments that it was not the season for figs (Mark 11:14).[25]

Some interpreters insist that these instances were examples of Jesus taking advantage of teaching moments to build the faith of his audience or to instruct his disciples in a certain principle.[26] Certainly, Jesus, as the Master Teacher, took advantage of every opportunity he had to teach and instruct his audience and especially his closest followers. However, to conclude *a priori* that Jesus simply pretended not to know the answers to these questions potentially impugns his sincerity. Furthermore, such a conclusion presupposes that Jesus was unlimited in his knowledge as he walked the earth.

This position certainly runs aground when Jesus admits that he does not know the day or the hour of his own return.[27] Interpreters clearly see here that Jesus is referring to his human nature.[28] Without question Jesus does not know the timing of his return. He

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[25]James Edwards explains that there would be reasonable expectation of early fruit in the Spring before the Passover. This fruit is referred called *paggin* and is edible. But this tree lacked any fruit. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 340, Logos.

[26]For example, William MacDonald says, "So He asked, 'Who touched My clothes?' He knew the answer, but asked in order to bring her forward in the crowd" (MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1333). See also MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary,* 1533; Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel*, 223; and R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 220, Logos.

[27]Matt 24:36 and Mark 13:32.

[28]For example, see Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 869; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 365; and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 955, Logos. Ulrich Luz points out that in the history of interpretation it

is not feigning ignorance. In his human nature, he genuinely did not know some things and had to acquire knowledge by normal means. If the Father chose not to reveal it, then the Son would not know it in his human nature.

The discussion of key concepts from the previous chapter helps the follower of Christ resolve these difficulties without compromising Jesus' humanity or contradicting his deity. What is true of Jesus' divine or human nature can be said to be true of his person. So the Gospel writers do not hesitate to speak of Jesus' divine glory or his human limitation. This is the communication of attributes in action. When Jesus has supernatural insight, this knowledge can be attributed to the Father's revelation to the Son through the Spirit or his extraordinary intuition or capacity as the only sinless man. It is not necessary, and—considering the teaching of the epistles concerning the humanity of Christ—not favorable to assume that Jesus availed himself to his divine omniscience even if only on a "need to know" basis.

Jesus' need to learn or his lack of knowledge should not unnerve or concern his followers. Jesus warrants complete faith as true God. Even though, at times, he needed to acquire information in his human nature, because of the *extra*[29] Christians can be confident that at any time he knew and knows all things. In his incarnation, he experienced limitations while continuing to be all the while infinite God. He filled all in all while walking mile after mile from town to town in Galilee. While he rested from exhaustion, he likewise upheld the universe. He completely identifies with the human

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was uncommon to even associate this example of the limitation of the Son's knowledge with his humanity. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary on Matthew 21-28*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester. Hermeneia-A Critical an Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 213–4, Logos.

[29]The *extra* or *extra Calvinisticum* is a theological concept defined and discussed in chap. 3. In short it states that the Eternal Son of God, even after becoming man, was united with human nature to form one man, but he was not restricted to that human nature. Therefore, despite the incarnation, the Son retains and continues to exercise all his divine attributes. This explanation seems to be the most consistent for the Eternal Son of God to become truly man with all the limitations of genuine, unfallen manhood and remain truly God with all the power and glory (though veiled and unexploited) of deity.

experience though he never once ceased to be completely and fully divine.

A Savior with a Burden

At various times, every believer faces a burden that seems beyond their capacity to bear. As soon as their minds are not preoccupied by the immediate task at hand, their thoughts run immediately to a problem, a pain, or a weight that seems to have no solution. Parents can be flooded with sorrow upon sorrow over the rebellion of a child or his rejection of the gospel. Adult children of aging parents may be heartbroken over the decline in health and feel helpless to meet the needs of their loved ones. Their minds constantly simmer looking for solutions. Christians who deal with chronic pain may face exasperation at the prospect that no solution to their malady exists. As their world shrinks within the boundaries of excruciating, paralyzing spasms, they feel more and more alone. Young couples with small children may collapse under the weight of shattered plans and expectations when one spouse receives a terminal diagnosis. Such burdens are often borne seemingly alone through sleepless nights with floods of unexpected tears and paralyzing hopelessness.

Is there a friend closer than a brother during these times? Is there a God who understands and identifies? Does the Wonderful Counselor have compassion for suffering saints? He most certainly does. He intimately knows the believer's sorrow, pain, and predicament. He understands. However, his understanding is not simply based on his omniscience and awareness of the suffering of his people. He understands because he, too, walked a path carrying a burden, wrestling with faith, and yielding to the sovereign and providential hand of the Father.

Jesus' Initial Consciousness of His Mission

Luke establishes in his Gospel the need for Jesus to grow in strength and increase in wisdom as has been discussed. Speculation on Jesus' growing self-awareness

and what he knew and when he knew it bears little fruit. However, it is certainly not by accident that Luke remarks on Jesus' growth on either side of the incident from Jesus' youth when he remained behind in Jerusalem in the temple.[30] Luke points out that, Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple after three days sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. The leaders of the synagogue marveled at this twelve-year-old spiritual prodigy. Luke states, "All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47).[31] The perception of this early teen astounded the experts. They could not understand how he knew what he did.

Without doubt Jesus' self-awareness in his role as Messiah had already begun to develop. Though Jesus is a boy at the feet of the teachers of the temple, Darrel Bock comments, "Jesus is already aware that he is more than a mere student of an ancient and venerable faith."[32] He reveals his consciousness of his special role and place in God's plan with the words, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). These words literally state "Did you not know that in that which is of the Father is necessary for me to be?"[33] The ellipsis here is most often translated "about the business"[34] or "in the house of."[35] Regardless of how this phrase is translated clearly Jesus understood that he had a unique role and relationship with God. Bock points out

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[30]The statements "And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40) and "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52) form an *inclusio* on either side of Jesus' visit to the temple in Jerusalem with his family.

[31]Luke uses the imperfect middle indicative of the Greek verb ἐξίστημι which means "to cause to be in a state in which things seem to make little or no sense, confuse, amaze, astound." Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, Logos, s.v. "ἐξίστημι". See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 164, Logos.

[32]Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 267, Logos.

[33]Gr. οὐκ ᾔδειτε ὅτι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου δεῖ εἶναί με [?]

[34]KJV, margin of NASBU, ESV, NET.

[35]NASBU, ESV, NET, NIV, RSV.

that in Luke's Gospel the impersonal construction "it is necessary" is often used in relationship to Jesus' God-given mission.[36]

Already at a young age, Jesus recognizes his lot in life. Certainly, this growing self-awareness was limited to his human nature.[37] Bruce Ware suggests that Jesus was a "Psalm 1 prototype" delighting and meditating on the Old Testament revelation.[38] His level of faithfulness to his Father's law along with his perception enhanced by sinlessness likely meant that Jesus was wise far beyond his years. But that knowledge and insight brought with it a frightening burden.

At some point in his life, quite possibly before this visit as a boy of twelve years, Jesus began to understand that the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament spoke of him.[39] Ware posits what it must have been like for the young Jesus to read passages that spoke of his own passion. Reading and meditating on the psalms, Ware suggests that Jesus certainly came across Psalm 22. He writes, "As he reflected on the weightiness of the suffering described there, the despair and agony depicted, the Holy Spirit illumined Jesus's mind to understand that the one spoke of in the psalm, forsaken by God and given over to unimaginable torment, was none other than himself."[40] He goes on to explain that Jesus would also, as a young man, come to the awareness that Isaiah 53 described his eventual lot. There would come a day when the nation would despise and

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[36]Bock, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, 269. See also Luke 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7; 24:44.

[37]Perhaps it is appropriate to admit a presupposition of this thesis: a primary focus of the Gospels is Jesus human life. While there are certainly times when his deity bleeds through the narrative accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are accounts of his life as he functions as a human being, that is they are accounts of his incarnation and life on this earth. His life and teachings certainly reveal things about his divinity, but the Gospel writers typically describe the life of Jesus as a human while keeping the tension between his divinity and humanity in balance.

[38]Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, loc. 773.

[39]Several factors suggest that Jesus was an exceptional student of the Scriptures. His sinlessness, perfect faithfulness, and obedience would give him greater insight than the average believer. His demonstrates in the Gospels the ability to quote or teach from the Old Testament. He also had his own group of disciples who had attached themselves to him. Only rabbis would have such an honor. Finally, he was recognized as an authoritative teacher by the people.

[40]Ware, *The Man Jesus Christ*, loc. 782.

reject him, when he would be wounded for the transgressions of others, when the iniquity of all would be laid upon him, and when he would pay for the sins of the many. Certainly, confusion and shock flooded his heart and mind as he realized that the Lord, his father, had willed to crush him in order to save others. The prospect that his own death would satisfy the wrath of his father must have led to a perplexing blend of emotions. It is possible, if not probable, that such thoughts led to Jesus' questioning of the teachers in the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus' Growing Awareness

Certainly, this growing understanding through his teenage years and adult life would create an ever-present burden for Jesus. How often would Jesus in prayer and meditation return to those passages that foretold his suffering? Mark Jones suggests that reading about such a future could potentially cause great bewilderment for Jesus. He writes, "If you could read a book about your life before the events happened, imagine the curiosity, anxiety, and hope that would fill your soul. But what about reading a book not only about your life, but also about your death, even down to the minutest details? Such a book might fill you not simply with anxiety, but with dread and terror."[41] Without giving into sinful fear or anxious unbelief, Jesus carried a burden from early adulthood to the end of his life. This fact should fill the believer with great hope that Jesus, the Savior, the God-man, understands them when they also carry their own overwhelming weight.

Jesus' words confirm this truth. In Luke 12:50 he says to his disciples, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"[42] This statement comes in the middle of several warnings to the disciples and to the crowds to be watchful. He also warns them that his coming will result in division upon the earth and

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[41]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 85.

[42]NASBU. The NASBU, NIV, NET, NKJV, and RSV all translate this first-person present passive verb similarly while the ESV translates it impersonally ("how great is my distress").

cause disruption in familial relationships. Jesus knew both why he came and the consequences of his coming. But the prospect of his own death weighed most heavily on him.

The word Jesus uses to describe himself means to "to hold together, associate, take, hold, press, detain, grip, compel."[43] It is used of those being "oppressed" by demons (Matt 4:24), people who were "seized" by great fear (Luke 8:37), and by Paul to describe his dilemma being "hard pressed" between two appealing options (Phil 1:23). For Jesus, the knowledge of his pending sacrifice on behalf of the nation and the daunting prospect of suffering the wrath of his Heavenly Father brought consternation and desire to place this experience firmly behind him. He is growing in his awareness that the developing resistance to his ministry will produce the circumstances that will lead to his death. He describes his death as a baptism—being submerged. Bock points out that the point of this metaphor is "that Jesus faces a period of being uniquely inundated with God's judgment."[44] Norval Geldenhuys points out the human element of Jesus' anticipation. He writes, "The Saviour, while He is the eternal Son of God, is by virtue of His incarnation also truly man; and, therefore, the thought of His approaching suffering and sacrificial death fills Him with anguish."[45]

As his death grew ever closer and his anticipation of it became even more overwhelming, Jesus continued to experience distress and apprehension. In John 12:27 he says, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?

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[43]Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 3:337, Logos.

[44]Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, 1194. Joel Green points out that the reference to baptism "may also portend calamity and judgment" and supports this interpretation by the similarity of language used just a few verses later when Jesus refers to a "cloudburst" in 12:54. In a dry, rocky region a sudden, hard rain "could lead to perilous flash flooding." Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 509.

[45]Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 366.

But for this purpose I have come to this hour." The word here for "troubled"[46] means "to cause inward turmoil, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion."[47] John uses it to describe Jesus' reaction to the weeping of Mary and her friends at the death of Lazarus (John 11:33) as well as his state of mind when he revealed that one of the disciples would betray him (John 13:21).[48] The form of the verb would seem to indicate, not that Jesus has suddenly been overcome with dread, but that he has been repeatedly seized by the disturbing and terrifying prospect of where his path would end.[49] William Hendriksen comments, "this mighty disturbance in the soul of Christ had been going on for some time and has now become very intense. The horrors of the impending cross were felt now as never before."[50] Carson adds, "The verb is a strong one, and signifies revulsion, horror, anxiety, agitation."[51] The burden Jesus has carried already for some time grows to the point of being unbearable.

Mark Jones describes what Jesus experienced as a "perpetual Gethsemane." He goes on to explain, "This 'distress' was an ever-present trial and one that greatly 'pressed down' and 'burdened' him well before his 'baptism' on the cross. Surely, the certainty of his distress could not escape him *from the first time he read of his future sufferings*."[52]

Late in his ministry, having already carried this heavy knowledge for as many

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[46]Gr.ταράσσω.

[47]BAGD, s.v. "ταράσσω."

[48]Also Matthew uses the verb to describe how Herod responded to the news of the magi from the east that a new king had been born (Matt 2:3). The same verb describes Zechariah's feeling when an angel of the Lord appeared to him inside temple (Luke 1:11). Both Matthew and Mark use it to describe the sense of terror that the disciples felt when they saw Jesus walking on the water (Matt 14:26; Mark 6:50).

[49]The verb is a perfect, passive, indicative, third person singular indicating a settled state that has come upon the subject. See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 380, Logos.

[50] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 198, Logos.

[51] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 440, Logos.

[52]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 88. Emphasis added.

as twenty years, Jesus anticipates the conclusion of his mission. Yet he knows that the worst is still ahead of him. The never-relenting pressure upon him brings torture each day. He had no hope of a last-minute pardon since he knew that would result in the destruction of those he was sent to save. He knew he had to die. He knew what that would entail. He knew what it would be like. He rose every morning for years with this prospect. He lay down each night more certain of its reality. He felt its full weight as a man.

How does this understanding of Jesus' humanity and the burden that he bore help the believer who carries her own burden? For Jesus initial consciousness developed into growing awareness and, as his death grew nearer, became constant preoccupation. The Christian who faces constant pressure due to circumstances beyond their control, whether it is their own health, the health of a loved one, the spiritual condition of another, or any number of daily pressures, can be totally confident that Jesus knows what they are going through. He has walked where they walk; he has been tempted himself with unbelief and discouragement.

When the parents of a prodigal face heartbreak every day and suffer with each rebellious act, they can know that Jesus lived with a heavy heart. Even as they mourn each successive step away from the Lord, they can be encouraged that Jesus understands.

When a young wife lies awake at night thinking about the terminal diagnosis of her husband and her own difficult path ahead with three fatherless children, she can know that Jesus faced many sleepless nights contemplating his own impossible situation.

Believers in constant pain, whose body increasingly works against them every day, can be certain that Jesus wrestled with God's divine will and his role in God's plan.

All believers, regardless of the problems that are robbing them of strength and pressing them down, can have confidence to come boldly to the throne of Jesus who sits on a throne of grace to give grace and mercy in their times of need (Heb 4:16). They need not live in fear, like Esther, that they may not be received. No, the scepter has been

extended. Access to the throne is available.

Furthermore, they can know that the God-man on that throne understands and sympathizes with their plight because he has walked where they walk. When they draw near to him, they draw near to a friend who is real and who has faced real, unsurmountable, crushing problems. He is rich in comforting mercy and strengthening grace. He has invited all who are weighed down with burdens. He has called upon all who are weary. He offers rest (Matt 11:28-30). Having carried his own burden, he is ready to take away the counselee's burden and give rest and strength in exchange.

Help from a Sympathetic Savior

Counselors can use the life of Christ to help their counselees. They can ask counselees to take Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22 and use some creativity as they read it. Counselees can be instructed to imagine what it would be like to understand that these verses speak of you even as a youth and consider how difficult it must have been to carry this burden for your whole life.[53]

Submission and Determination

Believer's struggling with an overwhelming burden often face the temptation of depression or sinful abandonment of duties. They can isolate themselves from others and withdraw from their biblical responsibilities. As their world shrinks to the size of their immediate problem, difficulties, pain, or circumstances, counselees need help to understand how to respond in faith and obedience. Here gazing at the glory of the Savior

[53]A practical homework assignment might be to imagine how Jesus felt by reading Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 in the first person as the victim reads about his own death. The counselee could make a list of the specific acts of seeming injustice, sacrifice, and abuse that Jesus knew he would have to experience. The counselee also needs to know that the fact that Jesus had two natures did not make this challenge any easier. To get a clearer picture of the burden, counselees could make observations on the passages mentioned above such as Luke 12:50 and John 12:27. Counselees could also make observations on the passages that describe Jesus in Gethsemane as well as the description by the author of Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:15, and in 5:7-8. Having read and considered these passages, the counselee can then consider in new light the invitations of Matt 11:28-30 and Heb 4:16.

also provides a great help.

The Gospel writers emphasized that Jesus himself carried a great burden that grew and grew. They also emphasize the faith and determination that Jesus exercised while shouldering the prospect of suffering for the world's sin. How should the believer respond when their world is shrinking to the size of their problems and they find no relief from the weight that they bear? How can the believer control their thoughts that rush upon them at every moment? How do they avoid the temptation to mull and stew with these thoughts? How do they by faith find rest for their exhausted minds and bodies? Believers can take comfort that they should respond as Jesus responded—in submission and determination.

The submission of the Son to the Father's will most clearly manifests itself in the garden. As Jesus nears the cross, he is overwhelmed by the expectation of suffering for the sins of his people and abandonment by the Father. As distasteful and even horrifying as this prospect is, Jesus submits to the Father.[54] Though he clearly prefers to avoid the cross, requesting three times that he might bypass the chalice of suffering, he accepts the Father's will despite overwhelming spiritual and physical distress.

The burden that Jesus carries comes to a crescendo in this scene. Matthew tells us that Jesus was "grieved and distressed" and that his soul was "very sorrowful, even to death" (Matt 26:37-38).[55] Mark uses similar words writing that Jesus was "distressed and troubled." He also adds the detail of being deathly sorrowful (Mark 14:33-34).[56] Finally,

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[54]The importance of the two wills view of the Son of God (dyothelitism) and the decision to declare the one will view of the Incarnate Son (monothelitism) as heresy in Constantinople in 681 was briefly discussed in chap. 3.

[55]John Nolland points out that except for his compassion this instance is the first reference to Jesus' emotions by Matthew. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 1097, Logos. This uncharacteristic reference by Matthew places an even greater emphasis on the uniqueness and difficulty of the emotions Jesus suffered at this moment.

[56]For more information on the similarity and differences between the words used by Matthew and Mark, see Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 667n76, Logos.

Luke provides the most picturesque elements explaining that it was necessary for an angel of heaven to appear and strengthen Jesus. He was also, according to Luke, "in an agony" and praying so earnestly that his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:43-44). Commenting on these parallel passages Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry observe, "Jesus' agony is not attributable primarily to His dread of physical pain or to the prospect of being deserted by His friends and associates. The 'cup' from which He prayed three times to be delivered was the ultimate horror of separation from the Father. He was willing to undergo even this, however, if it were the Father's will, and it was."[57]

Every overwhelmed believer should find an example in the Eternal Son's attitude in the face of impossible and undesirable difficulties. In his humanity, he anticipated over a long period of time and, ultimately, experienced the complete dismay of his own worse possible scenario. Often, believers become caught up in speculation and imagining the worst possible outcome even though many times that is not what they finally experience. There was no doubt in Jesus' mind of the path that was before him. It would be all that he anticipated and much worse. Yet, with full awareness of his destiny, he submitted. Concerning this passage, J. C. Ryle comments "The calmness of our Lord Jesus Christ in the prospect of certain death ought to be a pattern to all His people. Like Him, let us drink the bitter cup which our Father gives us, without a murmur, and say, 'not my will but yours be done.'"[58]

In addition to an attitude of submission, the Savior demonstrated determination to carry his burden to its completion. Ryle alludes to this determination in the previous quote but emphasizes this resolve over his whole lifetime further with the words, "The

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[57]Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 221.

[58]J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Tigard, OR: Monergism Books, 2011), loc 15401, Kindle.

love of our Lord Jesus Christ towards sinners is strikingly shown in His steady purpose of heart to die for them. All through His life He knew that He was about to be crucified. There was nothing in His cross and passion which He did not foresee distinctly even to the minutest particular, long before it came upon Him."[59] Despite his limitations and his humanity, the Savior steeled his will and set his face toward the goal of glorifying the Father in his death. Not only does the Savior understand what it is like to carry a burden his whole life, he illustrates to his followers how to do so. He is sympathetic while still an example. He overcame his own burden, dwelling on the Father's love and acceptance, and was able to show love to others. Though weighed down to the point of death with his own concerns, he still managed to redeem humanity with his own life and even actively meet the needs of others even from the cross.

Faith in Trials

Finally, along with submission and determination, the Eternal Son of God gives his followers an example of an attitude of faith. Just as it is true that many believers do not often consider the implications of the limitations of knowledge on the part of the Eternal Son, many believers do not consider the role of faith in his life as a human. Yet, in his human nature, the God-man Jesus Christ had to live by faith in the promises of God. Faith is unnecessary when all is known, but since the Eternal Son fully experienced all the temptations and limitation that are "common to man," he needed faith to bear the constant burden of knowing the Father would sacrifice him for the sins of others. Consideration of the life of faith that Jesus led will also encourage the overwhelmed counselee to exercise similar faith.

Christians might conclude without much consideration that the life of faith was somehow easier for the perfect, sinless Son of God. However, Mark Jones points out,

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[59]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 15392.

> There were many reasons why Jesus could have struggled to believe God's promises to him. He was faced with one setback after another. From the temptations of the devil to the many failings of his own disciples, from the unbelief of his family to the wicked rejection of his ministry by the people and leaders of Israel, and then to the final humiliation of his death on the cross, we cannot for one moment imagine that Christ's faith was not tested. Yet in all of these circumstances, Jesus could not and did not waver in his firm belief that God would justify him.[60]

Every believer struggles at times to lay hold of the promises of eternal reward and rest in the presence of the Lord when today's waves and storms push them against the rocks of difficulty, loss, and disappointment. They need to know that the Savior sympathizes with this struggle having experienced it himself. Though he knew from the Old Testament that God would justify his servant and give him a kingdom, the path to that goal was bitter and lonely. Every detail was not revealed in previous revelation. As a man, the Savior had to experience this trial while believing in the promises of God.[61]

Though Jesus lived by faith believing his Father every day, as Mark Jones points out, his "faith in the Father's goodness would be tested to its utmost at the cross."[62] Every believer can follow his example of faith holding fast with one hand to the sovereignty of God over the details of their life and holding fast with the other to confidence in the Father's goodness.

Not only does Jesus understand completely the difficulty of carrying and overwhelming burden, he can help believers see that it can be done in submission, with determination, and by faith. He himself trusted the Father's promises. Even on the cross his thoughts were on forgiving his enemies, extending grace to sinners, and caring for his mother. If ever someone by faith rose above impossible circumstances it was the Son of Man.

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[60]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 66.

[61]This obedience to the death was the final lesson on obedience Jesus learned through suffering (Heb 5:8). Though believers are prone to focus on the passion of Christ because of its significance in salvation, the passion was only the culmination of a life full of suffering and learning to obey as a man for the Savior.

[62]Jones, *Knowing Christ*, 67.

Conclusion

Can God-in-the-flesh truly sympathize with mere mortals and the burdens they carry? When the Eternal Son added humanity to his deity, he added all the limitations that come with that humanity. He did so to "become a merciful and faithful high priest" (Heb 2:14). His decision enabled him "to help those who are being tempted" with exhaustion, despair, and unbelief. Having borne a difficult weight his whole adult life, he is uniquely able to understand and show compassion to those who also have burdens. Just as his overwhelmed followers must find their way forward through the fog of injustice, the consequences of their own sin and the sin of others, as well as the pain and difficulties of living in a fallen world, Jesus found his way forward with submission, determination, and faith.

A multitude of various trials saddle believers with an exasperating weight. Wayward children, unwanted circumstances, painful diseases, and impossible dilemmas represent a small sample of the problems that believers face. These and many other seemingly hopeless situations crash upon the follower of Christ like an endless series of waves.

Believers might be tempted amid life's crushing difficulties to turn to the Savior and ask like the apostles, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38). They may need numerous reminders that the Good Shepherd is not a hireling who abandons his sheep, but he truly cares for them (John 10:13).

Even if he did not carry the exact burden that some of his followers might face daily, he carried his own burden while also facing the sickness and death of others, the rebellion and unbelief of opponents and friends, and the devastating consequences of man's rebellion in the world. He is uniquely qualified to understand and help his people. He chose to experience a human life in the same way they do. Ryle writes, "Let all true Christians take comfort in the thought that they have a Friend in heaven, who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb. 4:15). When they pour out their hearts

before the throne of grace, and groan under the burden that daily harasses them, there is One making intercession who knows their sorrows."[63] So the Spirit intercedes for the burdened believer giving voice to their pain (Rom 8:26) while a brother also intercedes—a brother who knows and understands their pain and, therefore, can strengthen them (Rom 8:34).

This brother came to understand and anticipate and even embrace his burden through a lifetime of reading, meditating on, and studying the Word of God. He faithfully prayed and built up his faith and confidence in the Father through fellowship with him. He stands ready to accompany every believer who will cast their burden upon him and reach out in faith and grasp the same resources by which he learned obedience.

[63]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 10378.

CHAPTER 5

A FRIEND WHO KNOWS DISAPPOINTMENT: JESUS LIVING IN A CORRUPT WORLD

Jesus, as a man, identifies with the struggles of believers in many ways. He appreciates the sometimes overwhelming burdens that believers carry having carried his own massive burden for much of his own life. Certainly, he sympathizes with believers in other difficulties as well. Nothing that a believer faces is unfamiliar to their Savior who fully experienced the joys and sorrows of life in this fallen world.

At the core of many of the problems that counselees face is disappointment. Believers cannot avoid disenchantment living in a corrupt and unjust society. How they respond to such setbacks can have far reaching effects on their spiritual walk, their relationships, and their effectiveness in serving others. Disappointed Christians, especially deeply disenchanted followers of Christ, need to realize that Jesus is a present help (Ps 46:1) and welcoming friend (Luke 15:1-2). As sinners in a sinful world, they cannot avoid disappointment, but they must decide how they will respond to it and draw on the resources available to honor God while experiencing it.

Wrong responses to disappointment vary. They include isolation, sinful withdrawal, manipulation, irritability, and anger to name a few. Some may follow the path of taking on too much responsibility for things beyond their control. Others go to the opposite extreme and abandon all normal duties. If these sinful responses become habitual, they can lead to greater problems such as depression or a life-dominating anger.[1] Since disappointment is a universal experience, the temptation to respond

[1]A sinful response to disappointment is not the only cause of depression. Depression is a complex state with many causes, some even physiological, and many manifestations. On the other hand, disappointment because of unfulfilled, unbiblical, unreasonable expectations can, most definitely, lead to

wrongly to it is a "common to man" challenge.

When plans fail, and dreams are unfulfilled, believers can sink into a depressed state of alienation and bitterness. Whether the plans that never came to fruition include marriage, one's career, or envisioned ministry success, the disciple of Christ may have to fight a daily battle against the pull of bitterness, second-guessing of themselves, and even guilt. They may also feel completely alone in their failures. This sense of loneliness exacerbates their problem.

As disappointments grow and obstacles thwart plans, the follower of Christ can become preoccupied with her own "rights" and the unfairness of her situation. This preoccupation, too, can lead to greater bitterness or even anger toward God. A believer might begin to lash out at God, and discount or question his goodness. As she becomes convinced that her situation is unique, she starts to believe that she is the exception to the rule, and "God is good to all, except me." At the very least, she may question the Savior's concern. Like the disciples, she, too, may ask, "Do you not care that [I am] perishing?" (Mark 4:38).

The temptation to react sinfully to disappointment is a "common to man" problem; however, the Savior, himself, undoubtedly faced such situations. Jesus understands this temptation. This chapter investigates the response of the Savior to disappointment in his circumstances. The next chapter will examine the response of the Savior to disappointment in people. Both chapters will establish the fact that the Savior faced such disappointments as a man before looking at his response.

The Eternal Son of God left the perfect environs of heaven where he enjoyed the perfect love of the Father and perfect fellowship with the Father and Spirit. He came to a world infested and corrupted by sin and sinners. Daily he faced what could have been and what should have been had man not chosen to rebel against God. His plans, on a

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depression.

human level, were often frustrated; his rights were trampled; loved ones and enemies alike took advantage of him. He even faced economic instability.[2]

Knowing the Savior struggled with similar temptations to those that confront every believer and beholding his faith and obedience in spite of these temptations gives strength and encouragement to the disillusioned believer. He is a friend who understands the feeling of disenchantment when it seems that one's circumstances are working against him. As will be seen in the next chapter, he is also a friend that understands the sting of betrayal by family and friends. Not only does the Savior, who is himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3), understand but he also identifies with believers. Having shared their humanity, he can come to their aid in a more personal and effective way as a brother and a great high priest (Heb 2:18).

The Son of Man in a Fallen, Selfish, and Unjust World

Christians reading the Gospel accounts might gloss over how difficult it was for the Savior to face unfair treatment or inequitable circumstances in his humanity. Again, in light of the ground already covered concerning Jesus' full experience of humanity, the assumption that Jesus' divine nature lessened his struggle must be soundly rejected.[3] He fully experienced the temptations that come with humanness. To experience such temptations, he had to live with the limitations of his full humanness.

Facing Economic Instability

When Jesus says, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58), the believer can know that indeed Jesus lived by faith in the Father's provision. In fact, he likely often did not know where his next meal would come from or who would take him

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[2]Since Judas served as the keeper of the moneybag (John 13:29), it appears that Jesus and his disciples often lived off the generosity of others.

[3]This conclusion would be an example of the misinformed "evangelical intuition" to which Bruce Ware refers and discussed in chap. 3.

in as he and his disciples depended on the hospitality of others. Like the foxes and the birds, Jesus certainly spent many nights outside in the elements as he pursued his mission. The fact that he created the elements, the foxes, and the birds did not lessen his need for faith.

Facing Imposition from the Crowds

Undoubtedly, Jesus faced the temptation to be frustrated over being a victim of his circumstances. He faced constant imposition on his time and plans. In chapter one of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is seen healing people late into the night when the whole city, it seemed, had gathered at the door of the house where he was staying. In order to get time alone with the Father to pray, he had to rise "very early in the morning, while it was still dark" (Mark 1:35). Even after having sought out a desolate place where he could be alone, Jesus was interrupted by Peter and the other disciples who informed him, "Everyone is looking for you" (Mark 1:37). The Gospels indicate that Jesus often had to adjust his plans or make provisions because of those who trailed after him and constantly sought something from him. "Because of the crowd" those who were in need could not gain access to him (Mark 2:4). Also, "because of the crowd," Jesus had to retreat to a boat rather than be crushed (Mark 3:7-9). Even his own family could not get to him because they were prevented by the massive number of people surrounding Jesus (Luke 8:19).[4]

It might be easy to assume that since the "Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45) the constant imposition of those around Jesus was not a problem. Nevertheless, as has already been discussed, even before his public ministry began he knew that he had to lay down his life. Throughout his public ministry, Jesus

[4]For other examples of Jesus having to accommodate or adjust to a crowd, see Matt 8:18; 9:23-25; 13:2; 14:14; 15:32; 20:29-31; Mark 3:20; 5:24; 7:33; 8:1-2 and 9:25.

showed a clear concern for the timing of this event.[5] Prior to the proper time, Jesus had various motivations for wanting to avoid attention. Initially, for the sake of safety, he sought to avoid crowds and even withdrew into Galilee in order to escape the limelight of Jerusalem. Later in his ministry, he removed himself from Galilee in order to be alone with his disciples and minister to them privately as he prepared them for his departure.[6] Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry mark this transition "from a predominantly public ministry to a predominantly private one"[7] at Mark 6:31a where Jesus says to the disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." Mark even adds the editorial comment: "For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." (Mark 6:31b).

Stephen Voorwinde, in his systematic investigation of the emotions of Jesus as seen in the Gospels, addresses this dilemma and tension for Jesus. He notes that a combination of factors pressed Jesus to seek relief from the public spotlight. For instance, Matthew states that after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus "withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself" (Matt 14:13). No doubt, Jesus felt the need to mourn the loss of his cousin—a key figure in the Jesus' own ministry and life. And yet, Jesus'

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[5]See John 2:4; 7:6; 12:23 and 17:1; as well as Matt 26:45. The author John especially shows awareness of this element of timing for Jesus adding comments in 7:30 and 8:20. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John,* rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 159-60; Gerald Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 155, Logos. Additionally, Jesus' commitment to his mission and the Father's will put him in circumstances where he had to act contrary to natural human love and affection in favor of the Father's timing. This sacrifice is seen in the death of Lazarus. Jesus knew that the situation was critical, but rather than rushing to the side of his friend or to be with Mary and Martha, his close friends, he submitted to the will of the Father and waited to go to them (John 11:1-15). Though Jesus understood that the death of Lazarus was for a greater purpose, the need to refrain from immediately going to be with this family must have been difficult for him in his humanity. See Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 170, Logos.

[6]David Garland also suggests that among the reasons that Jesus often sought to avoid the attention of the crowds includes that, in general, Jesus did not want to be known as a miracle worker. He distinguished himself from other "miracle workers" in that day by avoiding publicity and the use of his power to bring attention or wealth to himself. Furthermore, Jesus was suspicious of faith based on spectacles. David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 77, Logos.

[7]Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 101.

effort to find privacy to grieve was unsuccessful. Matthew continues in the same verse and says, "But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns."

Voorwinde points out another important consideration in this particular case. Herod had already concluded that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead (Matt 14:2). Given Herod's reputation for superstition and his lack of self-mastery (as seen in the events leading to John the Baptist's execution), Jesus likely thought it judicious to move out of Herod Antipas' jurisdiction to the territory of Philip across the Sea of Galilee.[8] By the time Jesus arrived at his planned destination, the crowds were already formed. Voorwinde observes,

> Whatever his desire may have been for privacy (14:13), perhaps also including the need to grieve over John's tragic death (14:3–12), Jesus is nevertheless prepared to shelve his own plans at the sight of the crowd. Rather than seeing the crowd as an intrusion or a nuisance, Luke observes that Jesus actually welcomed them (Lk. 9:11). Matthew takes matters even a step further. Like Mark, he traces Jesus' positive reaction to a deeper level. Jesus is once again motivated by compassion for the crowds (14:14; cf. Mk 6:34).[9]

Jesus' reaction to these inconveniences when things do not go as he planned will be examined later. For now, it is important to note that the harassment of the crowds presented Jesus with endless temptations to react in sinful anger and selfishness. Yet, he never did.

Facing a Lack of Appreciation or Cooperation

The strength of such temptations may be seen in Jesus' interactions with various individuals that he healed. As he sought to avoid drawing crowds, Jesus regularly warned the people that he healed not to tell anyone what he had done for them. In fact, as

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[8]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 29. Voorwinde adds that the theme of Jesus' withdrawal from untimely threats to safety recurs particularly in Matthew. He sought safe haven in other regions when John was arrested (Matt 4:12) and when the Pharisees became particularly aggressive (Matt 12:15). This suggestion is consistent with the actions of Joseph who took his family to Egypt when Herod began his campaign to murder young male infants in an effort to destroy the rumored King of the Jews who had been born (Matt 2).

[9]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 31.

Voorwinde points out, in these exchanges some of Jesus' greatest emotional displays are seen.[10] He becomes quite animated in these appeals. The first chapter of Mark's Gospel has already been mentioned above as an example that Jesus could not escape the crowd no matter how hard he tried. The presence of the crowds provokes various responses from Jesus. This chapter culminates when Jesus heals a leper who audaciously ignores all etiquette and approaches Jesus falling face down before him and beseeching Jesus to heal him (Mark 1:40-45).

Despite the boldness of the appeal and the disregard for social and hygienic protocol, Jesus is moved with compassion at the state of the leper. Jesus sets protocol aside himself, graciously reaches out, touches the leper, and heals him. But the story changes in tone as Jesus' initial reaction of compassion and healing pivots to an entirely different response. Mark records, "And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once" (Mark 1:43). The purpose of this warning and dismissal is revealed in the next verse.[11] The newly cleansed leper was to say nothing to anyone and present himself to the priest with an offering as outlined in the Mosaic Law.

The strength of the words used by Mark emphasizes just how animated Jesus became. The word translated "sternly charged"[12] only occurs four other times in the New Testament. In addition to this usage, the Gospel writers use it to describe Jesus' emotions on three other occasions.[13] Mark employs it one other time in 14:5 to describe the reaction of the disciples toward the woman who lavishly anointed Jesus in Bethany. The

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[10]Other than the descriptions of Jesus in the garden or on the cross, these displays would be the strongest of Jesus' emotional reactions.

[11]The fact that Jesus touches the leper and, himself, ignores social protocol demonstrates that Jesus' anger was not due to the boldness of the leper in approaching Jesus and seeking healing.

[12]Aorist middle participle of ἐμβριμάομαι. A comparison of a few translations shows consistency in translation: "sternly charged" (ESV, RSV) or "sternly warned" (NASBU, HCSB), or "with a strong warning" (NIV), or "with a very strong warning" (NET), or "strictly warned" (NKJV).

[13]See Matt 9:30; and John 11:33, 37.

various translations say, "they were scolding her" (NASBU, ESV), "they spoke angrily" (NET), "they rebuked her harshly" (NIV), and "they criticized her sharply" (NKJV). The modern reader might hesitate to attribute such a strong reaction to Jesus, but the use of this word in other literature supports such a meaning. Voorwinde explains that the word "has overtones of anger and indignation."[14] According to Liddell and Scott the word is used for the snorting of horses.[15] Various attested meanings include "bellowing" as well as expressions of rage, indignation, displeasure, and fury.[16] In addition to this indignant warning, Jesus immediately sent the leper away. The verb here is often used for the expulsion of demons.[17] Jesus apparently drove him away having expressed his very vocal indignation.

What was the cause for such a strong reaction for Jesus? Apparently, Jesus anticipated the disobedience of the leper who dismissed Jesus' warning and instructions. Mark states in the next verse that he "went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter" (Mark 1:45). Whether Jesus had divine insight (revealed or implicit), whether his own experience informed his emotions,[18] or whether he could simply read the excited face of the former

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[14] Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 23.

[15]Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 540, Logos. The 9th ed. was published in 1940 by Clarendon Press. This present edition has supplemental material added in 1996.

[16]See William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 322, Logos; and Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 442, Logos.

[17]Aorist active indicative of ἐκβάλλω.

[18]On at least three occasions Jesus instructed those he healed not to tell anyone, and those who were healed disregarded his command as in Mark 1:43. See Matt 9:30 and Mark 7:36. In Mark 3:9-20 Jesus warns demons not to reveal his identity, but after a brief break where he was able to appoint his disciples, he returns and a crowd has already formed. A similar dynamic is seen in Mark 7:36-37, where Jesus gives orders to a deaf man and onlookers not to tell anyone of the miracle. The next scene (8:1) opens with a hungry crowd gathered (Garland, *Mark*, 77).

leper, and he knew that the man would not be able to contain himself, Jesus anticipated what would happen next. Voorwinde suggests, Jesus "is exasperated because he foresees the man's disobedience."[19] Despite his harsh tone and strong, clear instructions, the consequences of his compassion were unavoidable. The crowd would grow. Jesus would face inconveniences, interruptions, and further encroachments as a result. This challenge would lead to danger and even threats to Jesus' mission as ordained by the Father.

Facing Opportunism

Direct disobedience undoubtedly pained Jesus' heart. In addition, the lack of appreciation shown by others who benefited from his ministry certainly provided ample opportunity for aggravation. For instance, the thoughtlessness and ingratitude seen in the example of the nine Jewish lepers (Luke 17:17-18) would be a strong temptation to bitterness or, at least, disillusionment for anyone.

Jesus' own family tried to try to take advantage of him. Jesus faced taunting by his own brothers who wanted him to make a display for the crowds attending the Feast of Booths. They thought he should, thereby, prove his claims (John 7:1-9). Even Mary's request at the wedding in Cana at the beginning of Jesus' ministry seems to have a dose of opportunism on her part (John 2:1-4). Perhaps above all, Jesus felt the pain of injustice when the crowds who hailed him as king and welcomed him into Jerusalem turned against him and call for his execution only a few days later. Despite the fact that he constantly served the crowds, the crowds ultimately abandoned him. Certainly, this injustice and the attempts at manipulation stung Jesus as a man.

Facing Personal Attacks

Along with financial insecurity, inconvenient circumstances, incessant violation of privacy, inveterate ingratitude, and malicious as well as well-meaning

[19]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 72.

manipulation, Jesus also lived with constant false attacks and slander. John Piper describes Jesus' daily battle with trying circumstances. In addition to abandoning the perfection and security of heaven, Jesus came into a world where his enemies incessantly attacked his name and reputation. Piper writes, "His reputation was stained again and again. The slander was unrelenting. The rumors were incorrigible. The half-truths were too devious to answer. And in the end, the 'good name' of the greatest man was ruined in Jerusalem. The crowds that had hailed him as king crucified him as a criminal."[20]

Though he is the Son of God, his divine nature did not mean that the constant barrage of false accusations made against him hurt any less. Nor was the temptation to exact personal revenge on those who attacked him diminished. He was falsely labelled a sinner (John 9:24) and accused of being a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:18-19). His enemies claimed that he was not from God (John 9:16), but in league with Satan (Matt 9:34), and even demon possessed (John 8:48; 10:20). Opponents lashed out at him as a violator of the Torah (John 9:16), insane (John 10:20), and powerless (Matt 27:42).

Furthermore, Jesus lived under a constant cloud because of the circumstances surrounding his birth. Sometimes this cloud broke forth in a storm of accusations and insinuations. His honor and the honor of his mother were impugned when the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being born as a result of sexual immorality (John 8:41). When the Jewish leaders ran out of attacks and accusations, they created lies and attributed to Jesus evil motives (Mark 14:58; Luke 23:2).

Facing Unjust Treatment

Modern man often takes personal rights for granted. Western believers have been, for the most part, shielded by God's providence from religious persecution. As a result, they often struggle when they believe their rights have been violated. Furthermore,

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[20]John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 59, Kindle.

the sinful heart of man often claims he has 'rights' that are really nothing more than preferences. Nevertheless, it is painful and even traumatic to realize that the laws in place to protect the common good and ensure equitable treatment of man are not always respected. When one's own rights are violated, the sting ceases to be theoretical and becomes personal.

Jesus understands this struggle as well. His rights were repeatedly trampled and ignored in his trial before the Jewish leaders. Whether his trials were illegal, unorthodox, or simply hasty and convenient, there is little doubt that Jesus did not receive due process. William Hendriksen's observations are representative of several commentators. He writes, "In reality, the entire trial was a farce. It was a mis-trial. There was no intention whatsoever to give Jesus a fair hearing in order that it might be discovered, in strict conformity with the laws of evidence, whether the charges against him were just or unfounded. In the annals of jurisprudence no travesty of justice ever took place that was more shocking than this one."[21] James Edwards agrees: "Nearly every detail of Jesus' trial violates the rules for capital cases prescribed in the Mishnah."[22] The alleged violations of judicial protocol include holding and completing the trial at night and during a Jewish holy day, enacting the arrest on the basis of a bribe, seeking self-incriminatory testimony from the accused, the location of the trial, and the hastiness of a sentence that involved capital punishment.[23]

Other commentators are more generous in their assessment while still assuming that Jesus was treated in an exceptional and pragmatic manner. Since the

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[21]William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 607, Logos.

[22]James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 443, Logos.

[23]Hendriksen, *Mark*, 607-8; Edwards, *Mark*, 442-45. For a fuller treatment of the historicity of the trial as well as the relevance of the *Mishnah* to Jesus' trial, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary on Matthew 21-28*, trans. James A. Couch, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 443-46, Logos.

Mishnah was not codified until almost two centuries later, there are questions as to whether legal process outlined in that source would apply to Jesus' trial. Perhaps the trial was not meant to be a trial at all since the Sanhedrin was unable to make a final decision in a capital case. James Edwards emphasizes in his conclusion, "Much more plausible . . . is that the Sanhedrin short-circuited procedures and contravened the law, egregiously at points, in order to expedite Jesus' execution."[24] Nevertheless, whether or not the *Mishnah* applied or the participants intended to hold a formal trial, Mark makes it clear that the chief priests had a clear goal in mind that included the death of Jesus (Mark 14:55). The hearing was begun with prejudice and the necessary evidence would be found or created. Jesus' rights would not be respected.

Summary

Ultimately, more than any who walked on the face of the earth, Jesus faced unfair circumstances. Peter later indicted the citizens of Jerusalem, "But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you" (Acts 3:14). In his first epistle, Peter again restates the inequity of Jesus' suffering, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Pet 3:18). Nevertheless, he did so without sin, without bitterness, and without lashing out at the Father. His example provides a model for the harassed and harried believer to follow. Gazing at his glory as he dealt with a sinful, unjust world will provide impetus for the believer's growth in his likeness.

Many counselees struggle with the injustice of this world and with disappointment in their circumstances. It would be inappropriate to confront them mercilessly with the words, "Do you really want God to be fair?" "Let me tell you what is

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[24]Edwards, *Mark*, 443. See also Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 679-80, Logos.

not fair, God letting Jesus suffer for your sins." The counselor must avoid empty platitudes and careless applications.[25] Careful meditation on the various "common to man" problems and temptations that Jesus faced can open the eyes of the counselee to an aspect of Jesus' understanding, sympathy, and ready help. Counselors can come alongside their counselees to help them gaze at Jesus' glory as it is revealed in his reaction to his circumstances and, thereby, help them gain strength to resist temptation, gain insight to change their thinking, and gain motivation to grow in their sanctification. Furthermore, they can see a concrete example of how they can, like the Savior, "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

An Example of Jesus' Extraordinary Circumstances and His Reaction to Them

In order to help a counselee understand the constant dilemma and harassment that Jesus faced on a daily basis, a counselor can direct the counselee to Matthew 9. In this passage Jesus deals with the constant nuisance of the crowd and the relentless attacks of the Pharisees. His response at the end of the passage is especially noteworthy and instructive.[26]

The chapter begins with Jesus returning to his own city of Capernaum by boat after having been dismissed by the locals in the "country of the Garadenes" where he healed two demon possessed men. Though Jesus returns to his own city, possibly desiring a break from the crowds, it appears that his only reprieve was on the trip across the Sea of Galilee. Immediately there are demands on his attention as a massive crowd begins to form.[27] Four men bring a paralytic to him to be healed. Upon healing the paralytic, he is

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[25]This is not to say that the statement that it was unfair for Jesus to die in the place of sinners is not true. However, it may not always be the most appropriate way to approach a broken sinner.

[26]While additional details are brought into the following discussion from parallel passages as well as explanations from appropriate sources, the nature and lesson of this exercise is simple enough for any believer who has received basic instructions on what to observe in a passage to complete as homework.

[27]Mark (2:4) and Luke (5:19) include the detail that so many people were pressing into the house that the friends of the paralytic carried him to the roof, removed the tiles, and lowered the man to

accused of blasphemy by the ever-present Pharisees (Matt 9:1-5).

Immediately following this event, Matthew records his own call from the Master to be a disciple (9:9). Jesus with Matthew and his other disciples seem to be enjoying a mealtime together, and yet again a crowd begins to form.[28] The Pharisees, again hovering around, vilify Jesus for hanging out with the wrong crowd—tax collectors and sinners (9:10-11).

Next, Matthew notes that a delegation of John's disciples arrive and questions Jesus. He takes time to teach them about the significance of the arrival of the Messiah. Matthew further records that, before this conversation finishes, a local ruler appears and interrupts with a request to bring his dead daughter back to life (9:14-18).[29] Along the way, Jesus is unable to escape the crowd which presses on him at all sides.[30] In the midst of the crowd a woman with a discharge of blood lasting twelve years reaches out to touch Jesus believing that just touching the fringe of his coat will make her whole (9:20-22).

Finally arriving at the ruler's house, Jesus finds another crowd who had gathered because of the sickness of the young child. When Jesus insists that the young

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Jesus.

[28]Matthew (9:10) and Mark (2:15) say that "many tax-gatherers and sinners" were present, while Luke states that there was a "large company" (5:29).

[29]Since Mark and Luke place this healing after Jesus' return from across the sea, it is generally assumed that Matthew did not arrange these events in strict chronological order. Instead, this order is an example of Matthew's tendency to arrange things thematically foremost and only loosely in chronological order. See Thomas and Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 90; Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels for Historical and Critical Study* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), Matt 9:14-18, Logos; Steven L. Cox and Kendell H. Easley, *Holman Christian Standard Bible: Harmony of the Gospels* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 200), 62, Logos; and Donald Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 220-21. Morris sees Matthew as addressing the topic of discipleship in Matt 9:9-17 and retelling three stories of healing in the rest of the chapter (Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 218, 227). Regardless of the chronological order, Matthew's literary arrangement clearly demonstrates the point of this exercise in observation that despite the constant harassment of the Pharisees and demands of the people, Jesus showed compassion and remained faithful to his mission. For a discussion of the legitimacy of harmonization, see Thomas and Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 265-68; and Dale Ellenburg, "Is Harmonization Honest?" in *Holman Christian Standard Bible: Harmony of the Gospels* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1-4.

[30]Matthew's account does not mention the crowd at this point, but the detail is provided by Mark 5:31 where the disciples comment, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"

girl is merely sleeping, the crowd reacts with scornful laughter and even mocking (9:24).[31] Nevertheless, Jesus raises her up and "report of this went through all the district" (9:26). Undoubtedly, this news added further to the size of the crowd that Jesus had to deal with.

As Jesus continues on from this incident, Matthew records two back to back healings of two blind men and a demon possessed mute. Matthew describes the two blind men as following Jesus, crying out to him for mercy, and entering the house where Jesus went. Jesus healed them and much like earlier discussed in Mark 1, he "sternly warns"[32] the blind men not to say anything. Of course, ignoring the strong words of Jesus as well as his kindness to them, the men leave together and "spread his fame throughout all that district" (Matt 9:31). Jesus' desire to get a break from the crowds for whatever reason is thwarted once again. Voorwinde offers a reasonable explanation for Jesus' anger. He asks, "So why is Jesus angry? Why does he speak harshly to these men? Because he knows that they are going to spread the news like wildfire. They are going to make his mission dangerous and his ministry more difficult."[33] Their reaction is understandable. It would be hard to contain themselves. However, Jesus went out of his way to emphasize his desire for them to show restraint, and they ignored him.

In the very next scene, Matthew portrays Jesus and his disciples as departing from this scene when a "demon-oppressed man who was mute" was rushed to him (Matt 9:32). Jesus casts out this demon to the crowd's amazement. Yet, this gracious and powerful act evoked hissing and accusations from the Pharisees who had yet again

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[31]Gr. καταγελάω, imperfect, active, indicative. Although NASBU, ESV, and NIV all translate this as "laughed" or "began laughing," other translations make this expression stronger. NET has "began making fun of him" and the NAB and NKJV have "they ridiculed him." BDAG includes both meanings (BDAG, s.v. "καταγελάω," 515). Liddell and Scott suggest the meaning, "laugh, jeer at, . . . laugh scornfully, mock" (Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 886).

[32]Gr. ἐμβριμάομαι, aorist passive indicative. This same word is used in Mark 1:43 meaning "to be indignant, to express rage, displeasure, fury" or even "to bellow or snort."

[33]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 23.

assembled. They attribute Jesus' power and act to the prince of demons himself.

One should not underestimate how exasperating and painful these ubiquitous skeptics and blasphemers must have been to Jesus. At every step, every good work, they are there to vilify and attack. They lurk and undercut waiting for an opportunity or a misstep by Jesus. Obsessed by evil motives, those who were to be the "shepherds" of the nation irrationally oppose even the beneficial and gracious deeds of the Savior.

Despite all the good that Jesus did, the Jewish leaders continually "were looking for a reason to accuse [him]" (Mark 3:2). Voorwinde comments on a different incident which demonstrates their relentless pursuit of Jesus, "Their intentions are obviously hostile. Treacherously they watch his every move."[34] Dealing with irrational and relentless enemies is another "common to man" experience that Jesus understands. Many believers face co-workers who have it out for them, they share homes with ungrateful and rebellious teens, they even live with spouses who are more of a foil than a friend. This constant opposition only makes a difficult situation more painful. Jesus has walked in their shoes and sympathizes even with this extenuating circumstance.

Jesus' Volitional Response to His Circumstances

After a long chapter where he unsuccessfully tried to get away from the crowd and its demands and further tried to avoid the broadcast of his every work, Jesus' response in the last section of chapter 9 is surprising. He does not insist on his own right to privacy. He does not even shrink from the public to seek a break. Matthew states that he "went throughout all the cities and villages" (Matt 9:35). In this tour Jesus includes a stop in Nazareth, the town where he spent his childhood.[35] There the inhabitants greeted Jesus with only skepticism and unbelief. At this point, no one would question Jesus'

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[34]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 76.

[35]See Thomas and Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 94; and Easley and Cox, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 89.

commitment if he were to retire at least for a season from the public eye. Nevertheless, Matthew explains that Jesus determined to continue serving despite the demands, attacks, ingratitude, and unbelief he continually experienced.

Regardless of the resistance and mistreatment that would discourage the vast majority of men, Jesus chose a path of obedience that includes going "throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction" (Matt 9:35).[36] Jesus simply would not turn from the Father's will or the task that had been assigned to him. Though no one seemed to be taking his rights into consideration, though few were bothering to express appreciation to him, and though only a handful were truly committed to him, Jesus continued to do the Father's work. He did not dwell on what the people did not give him. Rather, he focused on what God had given him—a divine commission to preach the good news and ultimately redeem sinners with his own life.

Furthermore, Jesus' obedience was not sterile or automated. The next verse states, "When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). The word used for compassion[37] means "have pity, feel sympathy"[38] or "feel pity, compassion, or mercy."[39] It comes from the word for "bowels or entrails" and therefore means to be moved deeply from within. This response is more of an impulse than a volitional decision. Ceslas Spicq and James Ernest suggest the translation, "he had a visceral feeling of compassion."[40] All

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[36]Note Matthew's use of 'all' and 'every'. No doubt crowds met him at every stop, and his schedule was full and rigorous.

[37]Gr. σπλαγχνίζομαι, aorist, passive, indicative.

[38]BDAG, s.v. "σπλαγχνίζομαι," 938.

[39]Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1628.

[40]Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 275, Logos.

the mistreatment, abuse, and manipulation that Jesus experienced as a man certainly caused him angst. No doubt this angst was accompanied by temptation. But he never yielded to the temptation, and it never extinguished his compassion for the downcast or his willingness to obey the Father.

Interestingly, the verb "to have compassion" is only found eleven times in the New Testament. Seven times it is used of Jesus or by Jesus about himself.[41] In one case, a father appeals to Jesus for compassion (Mark 9:22). The final three usages in the New Testament were by Jesus when telling a parable and describing the merciful response to need or repentance either by God or by the Good Samaritan.[42]

Not only is this verb used almost exclusively to describe the response of Jesus or God, but "compassion" is the most frequent emotion attributed to Jesus. Benjamin. B. Warfield comments, "The emotion which we should naturally expect to find most frequently attributed to Jesus whose whole life was a mission of mercy, and whose ministry was so marked by deeds of beneficence . . . is no doubt 'compassion.'"[43] Warfield goes on to define this emotion as "essential perfection in God whereby he pities and relieves the miseries of his creatures: it includes, that is to say, the two parts of an internal movement of pity and an external act of beneficence."[44] It is distinguished from other forms of love or pity in that compassion typically expresses itself to alleviate suffering or to supply a need or deficiency.[45] R. T. France explains the difficulty in

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[41]See Matt 9:36 (earlier in the passage under consideration); 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 6:34; 8:2 and Luke 7:13.

[42]Matt 18:27; Luke 10:33 and 15:20. Similar words including the root and words with the same root are applied to the God the Father in Luke 1:78, to Christ Jesus in Phil 1:8, and to Lord in Jas 5:11.

[43]Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), 96.

[44]Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 97. See also Helmut Köster, "Σπλάγχνον, Σπλαγχνίζομαι, Εὔσπλαγχνος, Πολύσπλαγχνος, Ἄσπλαγχνος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* , ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (1971; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 553.

[45]Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids:

capturing the sense of this word when he states, "No single English term does justice to it: compassion, pity, sympathy, and fellow feeling all convey part of it, but 'his heart went out' perhaps represents more fully the emotional force of the underlying metaphor of a 'gut response.'"[46]

This compassion was most often directed toward the crowds or individuals within the crowds and their needs, both spiritual (as in this passage) and physical.[47] This care is despite the tendency of the crowd to be fickle toward Jesus as well as the typical lack of gratitude, respect, and thoughtfulness of the crowd toward him.

Jesus' example can motivate the injured and frustrated believer. As believers confront unexpected failure and injustice, they may begin to ask, "Why me?" Maybe they compare their lives to the lives of others and cry, "Why not me?" Regardless of where the failure lays, each one can look at the glory of the Savior and meditate on his perfect obedience and relentless compassion despite trying and unjust circumstances.[48] As a result they can receive strength to do the same. They can openly pour out their hearts to a sympathetic and kindhearted brother. Though cast down, they can rise by faith to walk with him again as one who has already walked in their shoes and understands their frustrations and aggravations—having been there himself. Looking to Jesus, they can by faith choose to focus on others rather than their circumstances and take up the call to serve. Keeping their eyes on him (Heb 12:1), they can receive the grace to transform their

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William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 179-80.

[46]R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 373.

[47]See Matt 14:13-21 (parallel to Mark 6:30-44) and 15:29-39 (parallel to Mark 8:1-10). Jesus also shows compassion to two blind beggars in the midst of a crowd (Matt 20:34), a leper (Mark 1:40-45), a demon possessed boy and his family (Mark 9:14-29), and a woman who had lost her son (Luke 7:11-17). In all of these instances except the leper there is a crowd mentioned. In the case of the leper, Jesus sternly warned the leper to tell no one, a command he immediately disobeyed.

[48]In comparing the frequency of Jesus' compassion to his other emotions, Voorwinde comments, "Those emotions at most might dominate a pericope; his compassion undergirds entire chapters. It is one of the major motivators for Jesus' ministry in Matthew's Gospel" (Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 28). Jesus' example can motivate believers to respond in the same way.

attitudes and behavior (2 Cor 3:18); they can receive strength to renew their hearts in the battle against sin (Heb 12:2-3). Furthermore, they can reestablish their hope in the Savior whom they will one day see face to face (1 John 3:2-3). This hope enables them to put off sin, to pursue holiness, and to serve unselfishly.

Those who are completely overwhelmed by their problems, whether those problems are physical or spiritual, tend to lose their perspective. Just as the person facing chronic pain can find it hard to see past the challenges he faces just to live a normal life and survive each day, likewise, the counselee dealing with chronic disappointment can retreat from life, responsibilities, and ministry to others.

All believers need to see the glory of Christ, who like them—in his complete humanity—faced similar injustices, antagonists, and less than ideal circumstances. Yet Jesus responded with obedience and compassion. Voorwinde emphasizes that even when the crowds were taking advantage of Jesus, he was compassionate toward them. He writes, "Despite the crowds' spiritual obtuseness, their inability to recognize his true identity, and their surly and childish responses to both Jesus and John, Jesus is nevertheless driven by an irrepressible compassion for them. . . . The disappointing responses of the crowd notwithstanding, Jesus continues to show them compassion by healing their sick."[49] He did not recoil. He did not fret over his circumstances as a nuisance or an intrusion. He even welcomed the crowds despite their fickle, opportunistic motives (Luke 9:11).[50] As counselees look to the example of the Savior, they can learn to look beyond their circumstances to the faithfulness of God who has called them to obey and serve despite their challenges.

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[49]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 31.

[50]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 31.

Highs and Lows

A further observation concerning deep disappointment with circumstances and the accompanying emotions seems warranted. Counselees struggling with making sense of life and facing depression can also battle emotional swings. As they attempt to think biblically about their lot, emotions can be subject to great highs and deep lows. It may be an encouragement to see that the Savior also, without sin, dealt with emotional swings.

Observe, for instance, John's account of Jesus' last night as he ministered to his disciples, fellowshipped with the Father, and even faced down a unit of Roman soldiers. Victoriously he assures his disciples in John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulations, but take courage, I have overcome the world." His prayer to the Father conveys confidence that he has carried out the Father's will and that he will soon enjoy the glory which he shared with the Father since before the foundation of the world.[51] In John 18 when a cohort of armed soldiers plus officers from among the Pharisees and chief priests came to arrest Jesus, they all pulled back and fell to the ground when Jesus identified himself (John 18:6).[52] This passage might contain the most formidable and striking presentation of the Savior in all of the Gospels. And yet, if one compares the other Gospels with John's account, it is clear what happens between Jesus' upper room discourse and prayer and this impressive scene at his arrest. Jesus is presented in his weakest, most human state in the garden in the other Gospels.[53]

Further discussion of Gethsemane does not need to be repeated. The point here is that Jesus understands what it is like to be buffeted by emotions. He experienced great highs and deep lows just as his followers often experience when they go through crises. Yet, Jesus responded with obedience, composure, faithfulness, and an outward looking

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[51]Note, for instance, John 17:1, 4-6, 14, 18, and 26.

[52]Jesus did not simply identify himself, but declared himself to be the eternal, almighty "I AM" as he did throughout John's Gospel.

[53]This is another simple exercise in observation that can be assigned to counselees. They can be instructed to compare parallel accounts and to record Jesus' state of mind at each step along the way.

compassion that compelled him to fulfill the Father's will and carry out the redemption of his people. When circumstances were overwhelming, he strengthened himself with sincere and open prayer to the Father. He did not flag. He did not yield. He did not sin. He provides more than an example for his saints. He also proves to be great help as a sympathetic brother, a faithful friend, and an understanding Savior. Gazing at his glory displayed in the Gospel record as he lives on this earth in disappointing circumstances spurs believers to face their own challenges and disillusionments.

Conclusion

If ever a person lived with the tension and incongruencies of life, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. Every day he spent on earth, dwelling among sinners and displaying the glory of the Father (John 1:14), he was confronted with disappointment. Every moment, every interaction with mankind, he must have felt a tinge of sorrow over what could have been and should have been. Sin had corrupted the Father's perfect world. Unbelief and disobedience had forced creation into an unsettled, unnatural, and futile state (Rom 8:20). Self-autonomy had severely distorted God's image in his greatest creature. Adding humanity to his person in order to live life on this earth meant that Jesus experienced the base consequences of sin from a different perspective. This arrangement brought him face to face on a human level with disappointment and injustice.

This constant confrontation with sin and its consequences must have frustrated Jesus as a man. In fact, John emphasizes that Jesus was angry when he came to the tomb of Lazarus.[54] Some interpreters suppose that this is indignation directed at the unbelief that he observes.[55] However, a more common interpretation is that the anger Jesus

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[54]Note again the use of the word ἐμβριμάομαι in John 11:33 and 38. Though the word means to express rage, indignation, displeasure, or fury (see earlier discussion) in John 11 it is translated "deeply moved" (NASBU, ESV, NET), "groaning" (NKJV) or "intensely moved" (NET). Only HCSB has "was angry" (11:33) and "angry" (11:38).

[55]Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 359-60. See also Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans.

expresses is directed at another target. The Savior is indignant toward death, an interloper who followed after rebellion as an inevitable consequence in what was otherwise a perfect world.[56] Warfield writes, "It is death that is the object of his wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death, and whom he has come into the world to destroy. Tears of sympathy may fill his eyes, but this response is incidental. His soul is held by rage."[57]

This response is simply another example of the disappointment Jesus must have dealt with daily. He lived as a man in a broken world held in the grip of a malevolent insurgent. The widespread, dreadful influence of this rebel and the prevalent, painful consequences of the sin he introduced through temptation gives birth to sorrow, vexation, and even disillusionment. But the Savior's experience was not unique. Rather, Jesus came to give help to his people by experiencing what they experienced. His followers face similar "common to man" discouragements and troubles every day. They may be victims of their circumstances. They, themselves, may be the cause of their circumstances. Regardless, disappointment is the lot of man in a fallen world.

Again, Jesus understands this disappointment. He sympathizes. He is full of compassion and understanding. He depended on the Father in faith. Peter explicitly states that Jesus is an example to believers in suffering injustice and harsh treatment. In fact, counselees can expect such treatment—as Peter points out, it is part of their calling. Rather than reacting with threats or scorn, Jesus entrusted himself to the Father, the

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G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelpia: Westminster Press, 1971), 407.

[56]D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 416; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 246. In fact, Bruce observes that many interpreters underestimate the humanity of Jesus in this scene and ask how he could be overcome with such emotions of anger and sadness when he knew exactly what he planned to do. Bruce states, "But in him the eternal Word became truly *incarnate* and shared the common lot of mankind: our Evangelist would have agreed completely with the writer to the Hebrews that Jesus is well able to sympathize with his people's weaknesses, having been tested himself in the school of suffering. It was in sympathy with those who wept that he also wept. Here is no automaton, but a real human being" (246-47).

[57]Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 117.

righteous judge (1 Pet 2:20-23). He did not shrink from obedience or responsibilities. He bore the sins of his people on his body to gain their redemption and wholeness (1 Pet 2:24).

Even as a man, he was able to look past the shame of the innuendos, of the attacks, and of the debasing crucifixion. By faith, he turned his eyes to the outcome of his work. He looked to the joy, glory, and rest at the right hand of God that awaited him (John 17:4-5; Heb 12:2). The night before his death, he strengthened himself through prayer just as he had throughout his life. His life was founded on God's revelation. The Scriptures dripped from his lips as he intentionally fulfilled each prophecy about his life and ministry. This knowledge of the truth also strengthened his faith in the character of God who would receive him (Luke 23:46).

As believers look to Jesus, they have a resource who can help them bear the incongruities of life. They can follow his example of faith, obedience, compassion, prayer, and dependence on the Word of God. Though they feel trapped in the cauldron of injustice or mistreatment, they can take comfort that they are not alone.[58] One, who is the Son of God and who is truly man, walks with them and will see them through this trial and each successive one. The Spirit he sent dwells in them to comfort, guide, and teach. He helps his own overcome the disappointing circumstances of life. The presence of a friend and comforter means more than we realize. As C. H. Spurgeon stresses, "Mourners often get more comfort from telling their griefs than they do from the remarks of those to whom they unbosom themselves. Go to Jesus, dear friend, if a sharp grief is now gnawing at your heart. If it be a trouble which you could not tell your father or your husband, go to Jesus with it."[59]

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[58]Key verses and passages that can be memorized or meditated on include those that especially emphasize the nearness of the Lord in trouble. Examples include Ps 23:4-6; Ps 46:1-3; and Phil 4:5-7.

[59]C. H. Spurgeon, "The Tenderness of Jesus," in vol. 36 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1890), 317, Logos.

The great temptation is to seek a change in one's circumstances and to focus exclusively on such relief as the beneficial outcome. While it is not wrong to seek God's gracious intervention to change one's situation, a counselee can be encouraged to look for God's benefits in his unfair circumstances. By faith he needs to learn to say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes" (Ps 119:71). Though his circumstances may not seem ideal, by faith he needs to say, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Ps 84:11). Through tears of disappointment that things have not turned out as planned or desired, he must embrace his outcomes and declare them by faith to be "good" despite all evidence to the contrary.

With confidence in the kind sovereignty of God toward those who love him, the embattled counselee can recognize that her broken plans and failed aspirations are part of the "all things" that God is causing to coincide for her benefit so that she might be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:28-29). She can be comforted in the fact that while he is doing this work in her, Christ's promise that "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5) is still true.[60] The sympathetic Savior not only understands her situation, but also accompanies her in it.

[60]This promise reoccurs throughout the OT in many contexts and to many individuals as well as the nation of Israel often when they faced difficult circumstances (examples include Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6, 8; Josh 1:5; 1 Sam 12:22; 1 Chr 28:20; Ps 37:25, 28; and Isa 41:10, 17). A study of these passages can also be a helpful reminder to the counselee.

CHAPTER 6

A FRIEND WHO KNOWS BETRAYAL: JESUS LIVING IN A WORLD OF SINNERS

The book of Isaiah bursts with prophecies about the coming Messiah and what his arrival will mean for Israel and the nations. But Isaiah also emphasizes that the Messiah will be a servant that suffers. In fact, he says that he will be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). The Gospels testify that Jesus truly is such a man. Jesus knows what the believer experiences when he must carry an unbearable burden that threatens to overwhelm him. Jesus is also well acquainted with the challenges, difficulties, and temptations of living in a fallen world where injustice and inequity often dominate. This chapter will investigate the truth that Jesus also identifies with believers who have experienced deep disappointment with people.

Disappointment with people is an inevitable reality of human experience. Life in a community requires life in relationships. The inescapable disappointment that comes with relationships produces pain and sorrow for many believers. Consider Ed Welch's comments on this topic: "Relationships are where we find the best and worst of life. Here is the pleasure of growing and peaceful relationships, and here is where hopes are dashed, and love is lost. Here is where we experience aloneness, victimization and rejection. Whether or not we like it, we need people, but they can make life difficult."[1] Tim Lane and Paul Tripp concur. In their book *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*, they state, "You've felt the sting of hurt and disappointment. You know that you have disappointed

[1]Edward T. Welch, *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 19.

others too. It is clear to you that no relationship ever delivers what you dreamt it could."[2]

Many counselees need help coping biblically with relational disappointment. Typically, the dynamics of relationships dictate, at least, a minimum level of expectation between parties who live in contact with one another. Nevertheless, since all parties are sinners, those expectations will often go unfulfilled. The believer must learn to respond to these unfulfilled expectations in a way that honors God.

Disappointment, hurt, and even betrayal can be common in marriages, in families, and among friends, intimate and distant alike. Breakdowns in the marriage relationship range from adultery to distant apathy, from active opposition to passive disinterest. In Gary and Betsy Ricucci's book *Love that Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace*, the authors summarize the problem that many couples face with one example. They write, "The ultimate reason for their ongoing conflict was not his lack of affection or her lack of submission. . . . So, what was the cause? When one spouse was disappointed by the other, the *response* was anger and unkindness rather than love and self-control."[3] Heavy unbiblical expectations foisted onto a young marriage can be especially destructive. Tim Keller points out, "Never before in history has there been a society filled with people so idealistic in what they are seeking in a spouse."[4] On the one hand this idealism pushes people away from marriage. On the other, those that do get married often suffocate their spouse with unreasonable demands of perfection.

Parents struggle with disappointment in children who reject their standards,

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[2]Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006), 4.

[3]Gary Ricucci and Betsy Ricucci, *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 98.

[4]Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 2011), 32. See also Keller's discussion of the problem of self-centeredness in marriage (56-60).

input, and even their faith. Children, on the other hand, often despise, or, at least, become exasperated by their parents' demands and inconsistencies. Often, in an effort to deflect guilt, children blame their own problems on their upbringing. Siblings also struggle to have healthy relationships. A crisis, like the death of a parent, for instance, might bring adult siblings closer, even those long since estranged. Alternatively, the death of a parent can bring out the worst among siblings especially when an inheritance or responsibility for a remaining parent is in question. In a digital society, friendship has been redefined and relationships with them. Nevertheless, this redefinition does not mean that expectations between people have evaporated. Expectations still exist, and they still provide an opportunity for failure and disappointment.

Marriages disintegrate regardless of how long they last. Marital bliss and promise can evaporate in the culmination of long-term systematic neglect or in the scorching aftermath of a selfish, impetuous act. Embarrassment can exacerbate the dismay of parents whose children not only reject the Christian faith but do so with public audacity and flaunting that can only be intentional. Children suffer from the sting of the betrayal of dueling parents who are too selfish to resolve the conflicts in their marriage and, instead, use their children as pawns in their efforts to humiliate and control one another. Churches recoil in confusion and devastation in the aftermath of discovering their pastor was not what he claimed to be, and apparently never was.

How to live with and how to respond to such disappointments are life skills that every believer needs in order to have successful, godly relationships. Carefully observing the Savior who also lived with such disappointment and tasted it fully as a man can be a source of empowering encouragement for the disappointed and even betrayed believer.

Living without sin, as Jesus did, would only heighten Jesus' sensitivity to the social transgressions that infect human relationships. In fact, it is hard to imagine that Jesus had any relationship which did not cause him disappointment simply because no

one could rise to his personal standards of friendship or loyalty. No one could reciprocate his love, mercy, understanding, or faithfulness as a friend. Because Jesus was sinless, Jim Mayhew argues that he felt disappointment more acutely than anyone else. He writes, "Jesus, because he was not hardened by sin, was the most sensitive person who has ever lived and so he felt every insult, every rejection and every pain with great intensity."[5] The Gospels confirm this position with many examples. After listing some of these examples, this chapter will consider how this disappointment affected Jesus on a human level. Subsequently, it will suggest what lessons his response offers to his followers who experience the same.

The Son of Man in a World of Sinful, Selfish People

Christians reading the accounts of Jesus' life may have an unspoken, unconscious assumption that since Jesus is God, he is somehow isolated from the pain or temptations that come through relationships. If this assumption were true, the humanity of Jesus would be seriously compromised. Jesus, during his time on this earth, lived as a son, a brother, a relative, a teacher, a friend, a neighbor, and as a public figure. He interacted with people in a variety of relationships and at different levels of society. He had close associates and acquaintances. He had dear friends and, certainly, customers, maybe even bosses, both kind-hearted and unreasonable.[6] Since Joseph, his earthly father, is no longer mentioned after Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at age twelve, it seems likely that he died before Jesus began his public ministry. It is also likely, then, that Jesus took over Joseph's work until the time he began his public ministry.[7] Certainly, he took over

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[5]Jim Mayhew, *How Did Jesus Feel?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 68.

[6]The predominant image of Jesus as a carpenter seems to always include him working in his Father's or his own workshop. However, it is more likely that Jesus worked as a day laborer on larger building projects, or possibly he did both.

[7]While Matt 13:55 reports that Jesus was known in Nazareth as "the carpenter's son," Mark 6:3 records the words "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary. . .?" Some manuscripts (including the very early $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$) assimilate the words of Mark to read as those of Matthew. The reason for this change is likely apologetic and the offensiveness of designating Jesus as a carpenter. However, the reading "the carpenter,

leadership in his family as well.

Taunted by His Brothers

Jesus' life was full of relationships that he experienced fully as a man. He can sympathize with believers in relational conflict. He was not immune to tension with others, even those who lived in close proximity. In fact, the Gospel of John clearly states that Jesus did not enjoy the warmest relationship with his own brothers. In the closest of relational circles, among his own siblings, Jesus faced opposition.

John writes, "For not even his brothers believed in him" (John 7:5). In fact, Jesus' brothers challenged him or, at the very least, provoked him as brothers are prone to do. With an annual Jewish feast, the Feast of Booths, at hand, Jesus' brothers taunt him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If you do these things, show Yourself to the world" (7:4-5).

Apparently, Jesus' brothers wanted him to join the crowds in Jerusalem and settle the question as to whether he was the Messiah. Possibly they resented the fame and attention that Jesus was already receiving. Or, maybe, they hoped to capitalize on it. Andreas Köstenberger suggests that following the loss of many disciples at the end of John 6, this brotherly gibe stung even more. Jesus should move quickly to "reverse his fortunes."[8] Regardless of their motive, they approached their own brother with skepticism and unbelief.

In agreement with early Christian tradition, many scholars believe this situation eventually, at least partially, changed and the author of the Epistle of James was

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the Son of Mary" has strong and broad support and is given an "A" rating in Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 75, Logos.

[8]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 229, Logos.

a half-brother of Jesus. Douglas Moo concludes his discussion of the epistle's authorship with these words, "When all the data are considered, the simplest solution is to accept the verdict of early Christians: the letter was written by James of Jerusalem, 'the Lord's brother.' Nothing in the letter is inconsistent with this conclusion, and several, albeit minor and indecisive, points favor it."[9]

Nevertheless, Jesus' action on the cross indicates that the Lord's brothers yet remained in unanimous unbelief. When Jesus entrusts his mother to his apostle, John, he goes against cultural norms in entrusting his mother to someone outside of his immediate family. The same Gospel that tells of his brothers' unbelief records this interchange from the cross. After Jesus spoke to John and Mary, John states of himself, "And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home" (John 19:27). Donald Carson attributes this act of commending his mother to his disciple and vice versa to the fact that the brothers are not yet sympathetic to Jesus' cause and mission. He also adds the observation that none of the Gospel writers mention that the brothers were even present for Jesus' execution.[10]

Pressed by His Mother

While the unbelief of close family members like his own brothers caused grief to Jesus, the occasional lapses by others that came with not understanding Jesus' role also likely caused him angst. Readers need to be careful not to romanticize the life of Jesus. Even Mary was susceptible to the opportunism that infected the thinking of the disciples

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[9]Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 22. See also Peter H. Davids's extensive discussion. Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1982), 2-22. Davids also concludes that the author of the Epistle of Jude is most likely the half-brother of Jesus (Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006], 9, Logos). See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 404, Logos.

[10] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 617, Logos. See also Köstenberger, *John*, 549.

and Jesus' brothers. When Mary enlists Jesus' help to solve the wine shortage at the wedding at Cana, Jesus responds "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4).

The combination of the impersonal address, "Woman," and the question posed by Jesus leads many commentators to conclude that Jesus' words imply a moderate to sharp rebuke. Köstenberger points out that other uses of this expression in the Gospels come exclusively from demons who violently oppose the Messiah.[11] He concludes, "This suggests that Jesus here is issuing a fairly sharp rebuke to Mary, similar to his rebuke of Peter when he failed to understand the nature of Jesus' calling."[12] If Jesus lived with such misunderstanding and wrong expectations from Mary who had firsthand experience of the events leading up to and surrounding Jesus' birth including the direct insight given to her by angelic revelation, Jesus must have constantly faced opportunistic, self-serving, and misguided expectations throughout his ministry. Such feelings of being consistently misunderstood and even used would cause heartbreak for any human being.

Doubted by John the Baptist

At some point in the second year of Jesus' public ministry, John the Baptist finds himself in prison. He sends disciples to Jesus with an important question, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt 11:2). Interpreters have suggested various motivations for John's question and doubt.[13] Most likely, John was confused as he sat in prison and was wondering how his own message of judgment related to the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus. Were these ministries the kind of

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[11]Carson and Köstenberger both suggest that this expression is sufficiently courteous, rather than harsh, but far from endearing (cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 170; Köstenberger, *John*, 94).

[12]Köstenberger, *John*, 95. Carson describes the tone as "abrubt" and concludes that the "expression is, at the very least, a measured rebuke" (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 170).

[13]See Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1992), 274-75, Logos.

things the Messiah was expected to do, or should he look for a different Messiah—another one to come?[14]

Since Jesus and John were cousins, they had likely known each other for a long time. At Jesus' baptism, John saw the confirming sign of the Spirit of God descending like a dove on Jesus and he heard the testimony of the voice of God (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23a). Later he clearly indicated his confidence that Jesus was "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). He further confirmed his confidence in Jesus as the Messiah when he affirmed Jesus to his own disciples with the words, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). In response to John's question from prison, Jesus graciously sends John proof and himself affirms John before the crowds. However, it is worth considering what kind of effect this question had on Jesus. Though the text of Scripture is silent, and it is impossible to be dogmatic, it is quite possible that this question from a close ally and co-laborer caused at least some degree of letdown.

Rejected by His Nation and Hometown

Just as Jesus knew in detail about his eventual suffering and death through reading and meditating on Old Testament revelation, he also would know of his reception by his nation. John describes the ministry of Jesus in his prologue, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11). This statement could almost be classified as an understatement. Nevertheless, Jesus certainly anticipated this response having read in Psalm 118:22, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."[15] Jesus had insight into the nature of the path before him which included

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[14]David Turner suggests that possibly the use of another (Gr. ἕτερος) suggests that John was indeed "pondering whether to look for another Messiah of an entirely different kind from Jesus." David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 291.

[15]Jesus applies this verse to himself in Matt 21:42 (cf. Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17). It made enough of an impression on Peter that he quotes it in relation to Jesus both in his defense before the council

rejection, suffering, and execution. He spoke often of his coming death. However, this knowledge did not diminish the pain that accompanied such rejection.

If it were only the leaders of the nation that rejected him, possibly Jesus would be able to dismiss the negative feelings that would attend such unbelief. But Jesus also had to suffer both the defection of followers and renunciation by those from his hometown. In John 6 great multitudes are surrounding Jesus in the town of Bethsaida as he performs signs to heal those who were sick.[16] This led to Jesus' first miraculous feeding of the multitudes as recorded in all four Gospels.[17] Not only is this crowd the biggest recorded in number by the Gospel writers—five thousand men plus women and children, but subsequent to this event John describes the readiness of the crowd to make Jesus their king.[18] In fact, John states that Jesus perceived that the multitude was on the verge of coming and taking him by force to make him king (John 6:15).[19] Jesus withdrew from the crowds, made his way across the Sea of Galilee walking, and came to Capernaum. But when the multitude realized the next morning that Jesus was in Capernaum, they followed him in boats. Jesus, enjoying possibly his highest level of popularity, delivers his discourse on the bread of life. In the aftermath of this discourse, John explains, "many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him" (John 6:66).

This defection certainly affected Jesus. Even if his closest disciples stayed with

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(Acts 4:11) and in his first epistle (1 Pet 2:7). Paul also refers to Jesus as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20).

[16]Parallel accounts confirm that this crowd was a great multitude and the location was the town of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee (Matt 14:13-14; Mark 6:31-34 and Luke 9:10b-11).

[17]See John 6:4-13; Matt 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; and Luke 9:12-17.

[18]Mark, Luke, and John each specify that the number is five thousand men. Matthew clarifies with the words, "And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children" (Matt 14:21).

[19]The verb used in Greek is the present, active, infinitive of ἁρπάζω which is the same verb used in 1 Thess 4:17 to describe the "catching up" of believers when they are glorified at the Lord's coming for the church.

him, seeing the majority walk away in disgust and unbelief would elicit sorrow and compassion.[20] The tone of Jesus' following question to those who remained could be read two ways. A believer could read Jesus' inquiry—"You do not want to go away also, do you?" (John 6:67)—as a challenge to which Jesus already knows the answer. But, considering the context and Jesus' comment that there was still a traitor in their midst (John 6:70-71), a more appropriate tone for this question might be sincerity with a measure of concern. In his humanity, maybe Jesus did not know with total certainty how his disciples would respond, though he expected a negative answer.[21] The rejection by the masses certainly gave Jesus opportunity for grief and likely raised concern about the commitment and loyalty of his closer disciples.

Beyond his siblings and those who loosely attached themselves to him, Jesus also experienced total and aggressive rejection by his hometown. Nazareth, a small town of fewer than 500,[22] was a by-word among the people of Israel as seen in Nathaniel's words, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus spent most of his life in this inconsequent town and would, without doubt, be the most famous person to

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[20]Carson posits that based on the flow of the narrative, possibly only a few disciples remain alongside the twelve (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 303).

[21]Köstenberger comments that the situation does raise a legitimate question even though Jesus expects a positive answer to his inquiry (Köstenberger, *John*, 221). Carson interprets this question more as a challenge asked for the sake of the disciples rather than out of genuine sincerity and concern based on the use of the negative particle μή (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 303). Morris goes so far as to say, "Jesus confidently looks for loyalty from these men." Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev.ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 344. Archibald T. Robinson insists that while the use of the negative particle μή does anticipate a positive answer, nevertheless, "any answer may be given." Archibald. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006), 917, Logos. He also points out that "The precise emotion expressed in each case depends on the context (Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1175). In a different work, he classifies John 6:67 as expressing sympathy. Archibald T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament, for Students Familiar with the Elements of Greek* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 177, Logos. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 519, Logos. In light of contextual considerations, perhaps Jesus' confidence level is not as high as these interpreters suppose. As is seen in the next section, the disciples provided plenty of opportunities for disappointment themselves.

[22]This conclusion is based on the extent of first-century ruins (Jonathan L. Reed, "Nazareth," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 951, Logos.

come from it. Luke records that Jesus came back to his hometown very early in his ministry (Luke 4:16-30).[23] Matthew and Mark record a later visit again when Jesus already had disciples with him.[24] On the first visit, after a reading from Isaiah and an assertion of his Messiahship, the townspeople seemed to appreciate their hometown boy and his message. Luke writes, "All spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth" (Luke 4:22). However, the mood quickly turned sour and the appreciation of the people evaporated after a short message. Jesus expressed his expectation that, indeed, he would not be respected for long if he did not perform miracles for them. He also gave a couple of examples of God's grace shown to Gentiles instead of the nation of Israel. As Hiebert expresses, "Jesus evoked their violent, uncontrollable rage."[25] Luke states that the infuriated listeners in the synagogue "rose up

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[23]This event in Luke's "orderly account" (1:3) comes right after Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness.

[24]Found in Matt 13:54-58 and Mark 6:1-6a. Many interpreters assume that these two visits are really the same, but that Luke has moved his account of the visit earlier in his account to give it prominence. For example, see James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 134, Logos; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 574n2, Logos; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 179; and Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 777. Others assert that one cannot be certain about this assumption. See Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 364; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 548n3; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 383; and Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke*, in vol.10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2007), 108. This discussion proceeds on the assumption along with other interpreters that there are two separate, albeit similar, visits to Nazareth. See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 48, 94; John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1990), 309; William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 201n2. In fact, D. Edmund Hiebert lists several reasons that two different events are described here, including the fact that the timing of the visits seems to be distinct in Luke's account, and the presence of his disciples in Mark's and Matthew's account is not recorded in Luke. Also the response in Luke's account of violent, uncontrollable rage, and the response in Mark and Mathew of cool indifference, the content of the sermon recorded in Luke's earlier visit is absent in other accounts, and, finally, Matthew gives indication of two different visits, an earlier and later one, in Matt 4:13 and then again later in his account in 13:54-58. See D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994), 151-52.

[25]Heibert, *The Gospel of Mark*, 152.

and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff" (Luke 4:29).

Such an extreme response did not prevent Jesus from making a second visit in hopes that some might believe. He returns later and this time the response remains obdurate, but with less violence.[26] Matthew records that the people were astonished by his wisdom and miraculous powers. Unfortunately, this astonishment did not bear fruit. Instead, the people of Jesus' hometown were offended[27] and faithless. Osborne points out that the word used in Greek that is translated "offended" is much stronger in Greek than in English: "it connotes deep sin and has connotations of apostasy. Here it denotes total rejection."[28]

Truly what was said of the suffering servant by Isaiah was a reoccurring experience for Jesus. He was "deeply despised [and] abhorred by the nation" (Isa 49:7). He was "despised and rejected by men; . . . and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa 53:3). Many of his own disciples changed their minds about him. The citizens of the village where he grew up attempted to execute him. Eventually, prompted by their leaders, his fellow citizens crucified him. Jesus repeatedly experience rejection and faced opposition from allies and enemies alike.

Misunderstood by His Disciples

Even those in his closest circle cause repeated heartache for Jesus as he approached his own inevitable death. The "Judas kiss" is proverbial for an act of affection that is done in betrayal by a close confidant, associate, or even friend. Even at this traitorous act, Jesus addresses Judas as "friend."[29] Anticipating this betrayal did not

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[26]See Matt 13:54-58 and Mark 6:1-6a.

[27]Imperfect, passive indicative, third plural of σκανδαλίζω.

[28]Osborne, *Matthew*, 551.

[29]This word is used two other times in parables as a courteous address to a companion or to

make it any easier for Jesus.[30]

The treachery of Judas certainly wounded Jesus. But the density of his other disciples must have also tested his patience and driven him to near exasperation. The tendency of the disciples, especially Peter, to misunderstand Jesus has been well documented. Often, it seemed that their focus was on the benefit they would receive being leaders in Jesus' kingdom. Peter typifies the one step forward and two steps back disciple. The consistent failure of this band in whom Jesus invested so much had to dishearten Jesus, at least occasionally.

Numerous times Jesus caught the disciples arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.[31] On the night before Jesus' death one of these arguments broke out just moments after Jesus has washed their feet and taught them that they should be ready and willing to serve one another in the same way (John 13:5-17). Soon after this lesson, Luke writes, "A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24).[32] Jesus must have been tempted to frustration with the inability of the disciples to grasp lessons that he had taught them repeatedly.[33]

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one with whom one has much in common.

[30]In John 13:18 Jesus explains that he saw Judas's act as a fulfillment of Ps 41:9.

[31]According to Thomas and Gundry's *Harmony of the Gospels*, this discussion and dispute surfaced on three separate occasions: first, in Matt 18:1-5 which parallels Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48; second, the request by James and John for positions in Jesus' kingdom in which Mark records that their mother, Jesus' aunt became embroiled (Matt 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45); and third, again in the upper room (Luke 22:24-30). See Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 124, 169, and 211.

[32]This conclusion assumes that Luke and John correspond in their parallel passages where Jesus identifies the betrayer (Luke 22:21-23 and John 13:21-20) and where Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him as well (Luke 22:31-38 and John 13:31-38), and that both Luke and John are following chronological sequences in their recording of what happened that night. See Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony of the* Gospels, 208-12; and Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospel*s (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Luke 22:24-27, Logos. Some interpreters consider the dispute in Luke 22:24-30 to be the occasion for Jesus' action of washing the disciples' feet. Jesus' words in Luke 24:27 could be referring back to his previous deed, "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table?" Whether the dispute preceded or followed the teaching and example of Christ, the inability of the disciples to grasp Jesus' definition of greatness could have been quite discouraging.

[33]One example of this inability is the response of the disciples to Jesus' desire to feed a second multitude in Decapolis (Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). It appears that these events were not separated by much time at all, possibly only a few weeks or a couple of months. And yet the disciples did not consider the first miraculous feeding when Jesus expressed his intention to provide sustenance for the second crowd

Through to the last night that Jesus had with his disciples, his closest friends repeatedly let him down. The inability of Peter, James, and John to uphold him in prayer, the swiftness with which all the disciples abandoned him at his trial and crucifixion, and the quickness to abandon their mission and return to their former way of life must have caused both pain and perplexity to the human spirit of Jesus.[34] Their defection left him alone as a man in his greatest moment of need. He experienced betrayal, denial, and abandonment by all his friends. The counselee who is deeply discouraged and even depressed in their disappointment in others can be assured that Jesus knows firsthand what they are experiencing.[35]

Jesus' Emotional Response to Unbelief, Betrayal, and Other Examples of Human Disappointment

The reader of the four Gospels would expect Jesus to have many different reactions as he experienced disappointment with people. Just as the study of the emotions that Jesus demonstrated as he responded to his circumstances was instructive, likewise it is helpful to look at these emotional reactions to people and observe what can be learned about the Savior's human experience and character. Since circumstances and the people that cause them are closely connected, some ground will be briefly revisited. The focus of this section will be on Jesus' response to people who benefited from his ministry, but disregarded his commands, to the Pharisee's who rejected him and failed to lead the

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(Matt 15:32-33).

[34]See John 21:1-4.

[35]An observation exercise for the counselee can be done in John 18:12-27. The counselee can simply describe each scene, the characters, and the location in 18:12-14, 18:15-18, 18:19-24, 18:25-27, 18:28-40. John builds tension by switching between scenes of Jesus standing trial alone and Peter and his denials in the courtyard. This interchange shows how Jesus, at the exact moment when he most needs the support of friendship, is alone without anyone willing to identify with him. The counselee can compare Matthew's account of Peter's third denial (John 18:25-27 parallels Matthew 26:74) which includes the detail of Peter cursing and swearing and with Luke's account (Luke 22:60-61) which includes the information that the Lord turned and saw Peter at this instant. Typically, believers identify with Peter in this situation because they are aware of the many times they betray their Lord. However, when consideration is given to the way Jesus felt at this moment, the counselee can see that Jesus identifies with them in their deep hurt and disappointment when betrayed by others.

people spiritually to receive their Messiah, and to His disciples and their dullness and slowness to understand his teaching and role.

Ungrateful Beneficiaries

As described in chapter 5, Jesus had strongly rebuked and even sternly warned people that he healed not to tell anyone what had happened. In the first instance, a leper whom Jesus healed "went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news" (Mark 1:45) even though Jesus "sternly warned him" and explicitly told him not to say anything to anyone (Mark 1:44-45). As a result, Jesus could no longer freely move about, he had to avoid larger towns, and he had to remain in more unpopulated areas.

Later, in Galilee, Jesus heals two blind men and again "sternly warned them [saying], 'See that no one knows about it'" (Matt 9:30). The next verse reports that "they went away and spread his fame through all that district" (Matt 9:31).

Again later, this time in the Gentile region of Decapolis, Jesus heals a deaf and mute man. Mark reports that just prior to healing the man Jesus looked up to heaven and sighed (Mark 7:34).[36] After the healing, Jesus addresses this man and others present and "charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it" (Mark 7:36). Different interpreters offer different explanations for Jesus' sigh.[37] However, in light of usage in the New Testament where it is regularly used to

[36]Gr. στενάζω, aorist, active, indicative, 3rd person, singular meaning "to express oneself involuntarily in the face of an undesirable circumstance, sigh, groan; to express discontent, complain." William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 942, Logos. Of the six uses of this verb in the NT, including Mark 7:34 (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:2; 5:4; Heb 13:17; Jas 5:9), this is the only instance translated as "sighed." All other verses are translated as "groan" or "grumble." This is consistent with the meaning found in Louw-Nida, "to groan or sigh as the result of deep concern or stress." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 304, Logos.

[37]Hiebert suggests that this expression is a groan of sympathy for the plight of the poor man (Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark*, 214). France suggests that the sigh simply signifies "Jesus' deep emotional involvement." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 303-4, Logos. See also Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 267. Lenski equates the sigh with a prayer. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 311, Logos.

express a groaning and deep longing to be freed from a current oppressive or uncomfortable situation, it is possible that Jesus is expressing his disappointment that yet again his direct appeals will be ignored and he will continue to be harassed by oppressive crowds.[38] The constant disregard of his commands, regardless of how understandable they might be, must have tempted Jesus to bitterness and even complete withdrawal from people who could not show, at least, courtesy and appreciation.

Opposition by the Leaders of the Nation

Instead of recognizing and welcoming Jesus as Messiah, the leaders of the Jewish nation resisted and opposed him. They attributed the good that he did to Satan. They constantly sought ways to entrap him. This constant antagonism and the accompanying unbelief brought strong emotional responses from Jesus who felt the pain of rejection on the level of the national officials.

In his Gospel, Mark records that Jesus met a man with a withered hand in the synagogue and that the Pharisees and Herodians were there watching to see Jesus' reaction (Mark 3:1-6). Mark explicitly states that the primary concern for the leaders who were present was not toward the unfortunate man who needed healing, but toward the healer. "They watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him" (Mark 3:2). Jesus addresses the malevolent onlookers with the question, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" They could not manage a response. This hardness of heart brought Jesus both anger and grief.[39] This attack is the second straight conflict over the Sabbath that Mark records. It is quite possible that this group is composed of the same Pharisees hovering around Jesus

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[38]See Johannes Schneider, "Στενάζω, Στεναγμός, Συστενάζω," in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (1971; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 7:601.

[39]Mark uses a unique word here, συλλυπέω, which means "to be grieved with, to feel sympathy" (BDAG, s.v. "συλλυπέω," 956).

and watching his every move.[40] This combination of emotions give insight into the heart and mind of Jesus.[41] While he was angry at their indifference to human need; he was grieved by their treachery. The opposing parties of the Pharisees and Herodians managed to put aside their intense rivalry in order to oppose the Messiah and look for an opportunity to execute him.

Later in Mark, when Jesus returns to Galilee after feeding the four thousand in Decapolis, Jesus is confronted again by the Pharisees. The parallel passage in Matthew 16:1 adds the detail that the Sadducees were also part of this conflict—again warring parties find a common, unifying enemy. Thomas and Gundry comment, "No sooner had Jesus set foot in Galilee again than His enemies were upon him. They asked for a sign. . . . For the first time the Sadducees joined the Pharisees in attacking Him. Both parties were willing to forget their differences because of their common animosity toward Him."[42] Mark reveals their agenda. They "came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him" (Mark 8:11).

At this provocation, Jesus "sighed deeply" (Mark 8:12).[43] Voorwinde points out that the Pharisees (together with the Sadducees) are "are demanding something truly extraordinary."[44] They demanded final proof of Jesus' claims to be sent from God. No doubt this temptation to prove himself to be the Messiah for whom his fellow Jews were

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[40]Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 76.

[41]Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 78-80.

[42]Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 114.

[43]Gr. ἀναστενάζω, aorist, active, participle, masculine, nominative, singular. This is the only occurrence of this verb in the New Testament. The addition of the prefix to a more common verb adds emphasis. The verb means "groan aloud" See Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 121, Logos. The 9th ed. was published in 1940 by Clarendon Press. This present edition has supplemental material added in 1996. It could also mean "sigh deeply" (BAGD, 72). The same connotation of deep dismay of the circumstances or attitude behind the demand is surely present here in a more emphatic expression.

[44]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 101.

waiting followed Jesus all the way to the cross. Furthermore, the constant demand for more proof than he had already provided would seem to be a constant temptation toward irritation and bitterness. This demand brought a deep emotional response from Jesus. Jeffery Gibson surveyed this rare word in extra-biblical usage and concluded, "what is conveyed by the verb is always a sense of *dismay*, and never a sense of resentment or acrimony, vexation or ire."[45] Despite the aggravation posed by this unceasing baiting by the Pharisees, Jesus' primary response was deep disappointment at their actions.

Rejection by a nation that he came to save and harassment from the leaders who should have anticipated and welcomed him brought consternation to the heart of Jesus. The temptation to prove himself must have been intense. As a man, the demand to do so and the incessant activity by the leaders to frame him even in his good deeds must have been a grave disappointment.

Dullness on the Part of the Disciples

Shifting from the sworn enemies of Jesus to those who had pledged to him allegiance, Jesus also faced the temptation become disillusioned and bitter by their inability to understand his purpose, goals, and character. Two examples of Jesus' emotional response that reveal this disappointment in his disciples will be discussed.

In Mark 10, Mark reports that the disciples were preventing and rebuking the crowd for bringing children to the Savior so that he might bless them. Jesus' response to their over-protection is not ambivalent. "When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God'" (Mark 10:14). Jesus had already used a child as an object lesson in humble service to confront the disciples for their constant bickering over who would be preeminent in Jesus' kingdom (Mark 9:33-37).

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[45]Jeffery Gibson, "Another Look at Why Jesus 'Sighs Deeply' in Mark 8:12a," *Journal of Theological Studies* 47, no. 1 (April 1996): 138 (emphasis added).

The indignation that Jesus showed is an emotion rarely attributed to him,[46] but more often attributed to the disciples or Jesus' enemies.[47] Heibert says this expression "is a term of strong emotion and denotes His pained, angry reaction to what is going on."[48] The disciples are the objects of Jesus' disapproval. They who were so concerned about kingdom positions were so dense when it comes to kingdom principles. Voorwinde summarizes, "What really incenses Jesus is not only that the disciples have such a tenuous understanding of God's grace but that they also manage to stand in its way. By aggressively hindering the children's access to Jesus they are also obstructing God's grace."[49] Jesus had invested so much in these men and yet they repeatedly demonstrated their lack of understanding of his mission.

A less explicit emotional reaction of Jesus that expresses his disappointment with the disciples surfaces in the upper room. As Jesus tries to comfort and prepare the disciples for his imminent departure, Philip interrupts and says, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (John 14:8). Jesus' response to Philip certainly reveals that the Savior is disheartened by such a statement at this point. Going beyond the Pharisees audacious demand for a spectacular sign, Philip apparently is requesting a theophany along the line of what Moses received, not recognizing that he has walked with and known God Incarnate already three years.[50]

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[46]The word translated "indignant" in Greek is ἀγανακτέω, aorist, active, indicative, third, singular, meaning "be indignant against what is assumed to be wrong, be aroused, indignant, angry" (BAGD, 5).

[47]This verb is used seven times in the NT, all in the synoptic Gospels. This incident is the only time it is used of Jesus. In Matt 20:24 and Mark 10:41 the ten disciples are indignant at James and John, and in Matt 26:8 and Mark 14:4 all the disciples were indignant at what they perceived as waste. Jesus' enemies were likewise indignant when children worship Jesus (Matt 21:15) and when Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14).

[48]Heibert, *The Gospel of Mark*, 282.

[49]Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 107.

[50]Köstenberger, *John*, 431; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), 270, Logos.

Jesus answers, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?" Jesus continues his questioning, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9). Carson suggests that "Jesus' question is tinged with sadness."[51] However, the repetition of questions, the direct address to Philip by name, the switch of Jesus from the plural to the singular,[52] and the syntax of Jesus,[53] betrays more than a little sadness. Jesus is very deliberate and direct in this rebuke of Philip. The temptation to exasperation and impatience must have been great. Gerald Borchert has a better grasp of the tone: "The ill-informed response of Philip elicits from Jesus a rather sharp and yet somewhat sorrowful reply."[54] Lenski suggests that Jesus was "deeply pained" by Philip's request.[55]

Other emotional responses include very human reactions by Jesus that demonstrate that he got close enough to people to be hurt and disappointed by them. Jesus expressed astonishment at the unbelief and hardheartedness of those from his hometown who knew him best (Mark 6:6).[56] He was moved deeply by love and compassion toward a young man whose divided heart would keep him out of the kingdom and bound in self-righteousness and idolatry (Mark 10:21). Jesus lived among people and responded to them with hope and expectations as well as with hurt and disappointment. In his last days, he wept over the city that he knew would ultimately

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[51]Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 494.

[52]Jesus asks, "Have I been with you (plural) so long, and you (singular) still do not know me, Philip?"

[53]Jesus puts "So much time" in the emphatic position at the beginning of the first question and uses the personal pronoun for emphasis in the second question.

[54]Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 113, Logos. See also Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 294, Logos.

[55]Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 983.

[56]Interestingly, Jesus showed the same astonishment at the faith of a Gentile centurion (Matt 8:10).

reject him and execute him (Luke 19:41).

Lessons Learned from Jesus' Volitional Response

Jesus' emotional response proves how much he had invested in those around him, but his volitional response proves how ready he was to please the Father. Though full of compassion, it must have been difficult for him to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. His understanding of God's word and his insight into the heart of man meant that he could entrust himself to no one (John 2:24). How did Jesus react though surrounded by people who failed him? How did he react to the temptation to give up on mankind, to withdraw and to isolate himself in bitterness? Just as he responded to disheartening circumstances with compassion and service, he responded to the failures of people with compassion and faith. This reaction is evident in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament.

Perhaps the clearest insight into the unflappable and irrepressible compassion of the Savior is his thoughtfulness and selflessness on the cross. In this most difficult and impossible of circumstances and having experience betrayal on multiple levels, the first three sayings from the cross demonstrate Jesus' concern for others. First, he appeals to the Father to forgive the very nation that rejected him and executed him (Luke 23:34). J. C. Ryle notes, "His own racking agony of body did not make Him forget others. The first of His seven sayings on the cross was a prayer for the souls of His murders."[57] Though "he came to his own, and his own people did not receive him," Jesus did not hold this reaction against the Jewish nation. He prayed for them; he interceded for them; he appealed to the Father to have mercy on them.

Even in such dire straits, he lived with perfect consistency to the standards he

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[57]J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Tigard, OR: Monergism Books, 2011), loc. 17000, Kindle.

laid out for his followers, "Pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:28).[58] The priority for the believer who has experienced betrayal and treachery from others is to focus on God and on others. By God's grace they must forget about themselves and the personal insult they have received leaving that to God's concern. Jesus' prayer on the cross serves as an example to the counselee who has been deeply wounded. Norval Geldenhuys writes, "And how this prayer of the Crucified Redeemer reveals not merely His wonderful self-forgetfulness, but also His magnanimity and His earnest longing that his persecutors should be given another chance to repent before the otherwise inevitable judgment is executed on their sins!"[59]

As Jesus continues hanging on the cross as a substitute for all who would believe in him, he received abuse and taunting from the chief priests, scribes, elders, soldiers, and those passing by. Even the thieves who were fighting for breath on one side and the other of Jesus spent their energy and strength to croak out the same attack, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). Eventually, one of these thieves comes to his senses, repents, and believes. His conscience awakens, and he becomes an advocate for the Savior. His last words include a defense of the innocence and worthiness of Jesus, a confession of his own guilt, and a repentant request for mercy. Jesus, in his second utterance from the cross, offers this life-time derelict and not-so-long-ago blasphemer a last second reprieve and pardon. He promises, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43). This criminal is the first fruits of Jesus' prayer. The Father answers and grants faith and forgiveness starting with the least likely of candidates. Suffering as a man, struggling for physical life, smarting from rejection, gasping for air, and

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[58]Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 820; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1850, Logos.

[59]Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 608.

anticipating horrors yet to come, Jesus turns to this sinner and promises comfort and assurance.

And Jesus continues to think of others. John records Jesus' third saying from the cross. He looks down to see his mother and his beloved disciple together nearby. He expresses his concern as a son and discharges his responsibility as the provider for his family. He entrusts his mother to the disciple to care for her and provide for her (John 19:26-27). The cultural and spiritual implications of this interchange have already been mentioned. What is remarkable here is Jesus' continued self-forgetfulness and concern toward others. Carson writes, "even as he hung dying on a Roman cross, suffering as the Lamb of God, he took thought of and made provision for his mother."[60] To the end of life Jesus keeps the law, honors his parents, and demonstrates extraordinary concern and love for others despite unbearable physical, psychological, and spiritual circumstances.

Though he faced disappointment with people his whole life, Jesus did not retreat into isolation or sink into bitterness. He had been abused, misunderstood, taunted, manipulated, betrayed, and cast aside for his perfect life and good works. But this mistreatment did not repress his compassion or love for others. Even from the cross the first three sayings of Jesus demonstrate loving service toward others. This response is a peculiar glory to be observed. As the tempted counselee grieves and nurses the wounds of disloyalty and infidelity, she can consider the Savior's example. Reminding herself that he was like her "in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest," she can have confidence of the perfect sufficiency of his sacrifice and the available help from a fellow sufferer (Heb 2:17-18).

Just as his selfless service provides an example for counselees who have suffered the indifference and cruelty of others, Jesus' faith which manifests itself in self-control likewise lays down a pattern for them. When sinners are sinned against, they tend

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[60]Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 616–17.

to sin in response. Hurt people hurt others. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the believer under attack is to control their words.[61]

Though initially it might seem an unreasonable standard, considering the restraint of the Savior and the faith that this level of self-control demonstrates helps the counselee to overcome the impulse to lash out or tear down. Again, this attribute is a unique glory, but a transforming glory to be observed nonetheless. Peter reflects on the Savior's suffering and writes, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet 2:21-23). As Peter considers the suffering of Jesus, he links his sinlessness to a specific area of behavior, his words. Jesus, in his suffering, did not sin. Particularly, he did not deceive, he did not revile, and he did not threaten. Karen Jobes comments, "When people are treated unjustly, it is most tempting to respond by stretching the truth, putting our opponents in a bad light, speaking abusively of others, or making threats. Following in Jesus' footsteps through this trying situation means not responding in kind to the accusers or using deceit, slander, or threats."[62]

Jesus' remarkable self-control was not because he suffered less than his followers. Clearly, he suffered more. His self-control did come naturally simply because he is divine, for he was also truly man and "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Rather it was his faith in the Father and eternal Judge that strengthened his will. He "continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet 2:23).[63] Peter Davids comments, "Jesus was not, however, simply a Stoic who had moved

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[61]This failure is despite the numerous prods to do so in Proverbs, for example 15:1; 19:11; and 25:15.

[62]Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 196, Logos.

[63]Wayne Grudem says, "The imperfect tense here implies repeated action in the past, well

beyond feeling to detachment. He was a believer who trusted in God."[64]

The author of Hebrews also emphasizes the faith of Jesus Christ who died on the cross as the object of hate and hostility. The author of this epistle commends Jesus as the object of our attention. He explains that Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). As a remedy for the temptation to give up, the author suggests further, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (Heb 12:3). The opposition and hostility that was heaped upon Jesus by all who had a part in his crucifixion did not prevent him from looking beyond his circumstances to the inheritance that had been promised to him. Jesus knew in advance that his disciples would abandon him (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27). He knew that he would be alone without someone to stand with him (John 16:32). But the betrayal that he anticipated and the subsequent hurt that he felt did not sway him from his confidence in his Father.

Even the agony of the Father's wrath that led to his cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46) did not break his faith. Though he despised the shame that came with unjust accusation and crucifixion, he endured the inhumane and cruel cross. Though the abandonment and betrayal of friends and the hostility of enemies pierced his heart much like the spear that pierced his side, he refused to withdraw from his role as the substitute. He died for unfaithful, fickle friends and prayed for hostile, hateful enemies.

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rendered by the NASB: 'kept entrusting.'" Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 138, Logos.

[64]Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 111.

Conclusion

Jesus' experience reflects the same "common to man" problems that plague everyone. It is impossible to live in community with people while avoiding hurt and disappointment. Jesus interacted with multitudes and individuals, friends and family, enemies and allies. Each had the potential to bring joy, and each had the potential to bring heartbreak. Jesus, a man of sorrows, certainly experienced his share of the later. Ryle's words are apropos. He writes, "Jesus knows what it is to see friends and disciples failing Him in the hour of need."[65]

Nevertheless, some might conclude that Jesus' experience was incomplete. Having never been married or having never had children, maybe Jesus cannot truly sympathize with the sorrow that comes from marital infidelity or the pain that comes from teen-age rebellion. This conclusion would be false. As has already been mentioned, having never sinned himself, Jesus was more sensitive to sin, especially relational sin. His senses were well-trained by perfect righteousness and obedience. The relational wounds inflicted upon him by those around him struck deep. Furthermore, Isaiah testifies that Christ as God experienced Israel's rebellion as a loving father (Isa 1:2).

Additionally, Jesus does know the pain of infidelity. Just as Israel could not absolve herself of her spiritual idolatry from her early days through to her exile, Jesus' bride, the church, often chases after the allure of the world and idolatry. Therefore, the sin, rebellion, and trespasses of every believer strike out at Jesus as the bridegroom. Jesus does understand the devastation wrought by abandonment and adultery. This fact means that wronged marriage partners can approach a brother who understands their grief.

Isaiah gave the name "Everlasting Father" to the Messiah (Isa 9:6). Since every believer is born again in Christ, there is an undeniable paternal relationship between the child of God and the Son of God. Therefore, parents struggling with a recalcitrant child

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[65]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 8762.

can turn to a Savior who identifies with their sorrow.

Though it is a mystery inexpressible, Jesus experience rejection by his Father as he became sin and suffered in the place of others. He understands the profound pain of being forsaken by a parent.[66] When a child confronts the crushing realization that their parents only have their own selfish interests in mind, this realization does not have to determine their life and character. There is another that they can trust. The Savior who offers them comfort also experienced manipulation and was used by others.

Finally, the church member who approaches despair over the spurious character of a pastor who has been exposed as a moral and spiritual fraud can know that Jesus is also indignant over such hypocrisy. It is not necessary for the correspondences between the believer's experience and the Lord's experience to be exact for the sympathy and understanding of the Lord to be real. Ryle concludes his comments on Mark 14:43-52 which records the abandonment by Jesus by all his disciples with the following words:

> Finally, let us leave the passage with a deep sense of our Lord's ability to sympathize with His believing people. *If there is one trial greater than another, it is the trial of being disappointed in those we love*. It is a bitter cup, which all true Christians have frequently to drink. Ministers fail them. Relations fail them. Friends fail them. One cistern after another proves to be broken, and to hold no water. But let them take comfort in the thought, that there is one unfailing Friend, even Jesus, who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities and has tasted of all their sorrows.[67]

This realization of the common experience and disappointment that the struggling counselee has with the Savior can lead to more intimate communication in

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[66]Clearly there are limits to the correspondence of this experience of the Son of God and the experience of children. Nevertheless, the excruciating pain of being "forsaken" and "crushed" by the Father give Jesus a unique experience which enables him to understand and show compassion to hurting child.

[67]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 8760-62, (emphasis added). C. H. Spurgeon similarly adds, "You will often be disappointed if you select a man or woman to be your confidante; but if you will resort to the Lord Jesus, whom God has commissioned to be a High Priest for this very end and purpose, you will find him just the friend you need." C. H. Spurgeon, "The Tenderness of Jesus," in vol. 36 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1890), 318, Logos. Counselees can be encouraged to meditate upon and memorize Ps 22:1-5, Jer 17:5-8, and Heb 13:5-6 to help them understand the importance of trusting God and Christ in everything rather than in other people or other things to be their source of strength.

prayer and a greater sense of fellowship.[68] When a believer knows that the temptations were real and fierce for the man Jesus to become bitter, to give up, to lash out, and to attack, he can be motivated to respond with compassion and faith just like the Savior. As a believer draws near to the Lord, his appetite for the Word can grow. As he is compelled to observe his glory as revealed in Scripture, the exercise of observation has a transformative effect in his life.

Finally, when the disappointment is real, when friends forsake, and loved ones betray, the wounded believer can turn to a true friend. A truth that many old hymn writers captured may have been lost to believers today. Voices from centuries past remind struggling saints, "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No, not one." They compel believers to run to the Savior in whose "arms are ten thousand charms." Ryle likewise bids the buffeted follower of Christ, "There is no friend or comforter who can be compared to Christ. In all our days of darkness, which must needs be many, let us first turn for consolation to Jesus The Son of God. He will never fail us, never disappoint us, never refuse to take interest in our sorrows."[69]

Just as counselees can focus on the nearness of God in their circumstances, they can focus on the intimacy of the relationship that God seeks with them though Jesus as a comfort in their own failed relationships. These truths are confirmed in great themes woven through the Bible and in specific verses. For instance, God created man to glorify himself and to have fellowship with him. That fellowship was broken and corrupted by

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[68]It is not uncommon for a counselee to express the false idea that since Jesus never sinned he cannot truly sympathize with sinners. They feel that a failed sinner is more relatable. Paul David Tripp provides an excellent example that exposes the fallacy of this assumption. In short, imagine a strong man bending bars of steel. Imagine that he bends a half inch thick bar and it breaks, then he takes an inch-thick bar and bends it into a full circle. Obviously, the second bar stood more pressure than the first. This concrete illustration demonstrates how the intensity of Jesus' temptations was greater. He is qualified and able to sympathize with us in our temptation without needing to fulfill the prerequisite of failing in the face of temptation. See Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 167. C. H. Spurgeon adds, "Do not imagine that if the Lord Jesus had sinned he would have been any more tender toward you; for *sin is always of a hardening nature.*" Spurgeon, "The Tenderness of Jesus," 323 (emphasis original).

[69]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 11337.

the sin and rebellion of man, but the history of redemption is a series of steps and undertakings for God to restore that lost relationship with sinners. Sacrifices, altars, encounters, purifications, clouds, tabernacles, arks, blood, all prefigure and lead to the Eternal Logos who dwelt[70] among sinners and laid down his life so that believing sinners can have a new, eternal relationship with him. God desires to be with his people, but sinners cannot simply walk into the presence of a holy God. But God has done everything necessary to secure this relationship by sending his son to die for repentant sinners.

The God-man Jesus assured his disciples, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 15:15-16). He redefined relationships on this earth in terms of obedience to the Father ensuring that his disciples would belong to an intimate family in which he is the center (Matt 12:49-50). He also prayed to his Father expressing his intimate wish, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

The heartbroken and discouraged believer needs to consider that God had put her in specific relationships or allowed relationships to deteriorate so that she can enjoy a deeper, truer relationship. God is conforming her to the image of his son so that he can be the first among many brothers (Rom 8:28-29). Nevertheless, she might share with Jesus the experience that Spurgeon describes. He says of the Savior, "But surely he found some solace with the few companions whom he had gathered around him. He did; but for all that he must have found as much sorrow as solace in their company. . . . His was a lonely life, I mean that even when he was with his followers, he was alone."[71] Though she may

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[70]Literally "tabernacled" in John 1:14.

[71]C. H. Spurgeon, "The Man of Sorrows," in vol. 19 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*

feel alone, she is not, for this preeminent brother will never leave her, forsake her, or betray her (Heb 13:5).

Sermons (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 129, Logos.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The reader of the Gospels faces a paradox and a mystery when studying the life and work of Jesus. The Eternal Son of God and promised King of kings did not come to this world with pomp, circumstance, and recognition. As J. C. Ryle points out, he did not have a royal chariot or an army of soldiers surrounding him, but rather borrowed the colt of a donkey to enter his royal city. He was even buried in a borrowed tomb.[1] He was humble, burdened, and often faced inequitable circumstances and unreliable people. On the one hand this paradox leads to wonder. Ryle continues, "Who that reads the Gospels carefully can fail to observe, that He who could feed thousands with a few loaves, was Himself sometimes hungry—and He who could heal the sick and infirm, was Himself sometimes weary—that He who could cast out devils with a word, was Himself tempted—and He would could raise the dead, could Himself submit to die?"[2] On the other hand, this seeming contradiction brings encouragement to believers that the Savior truly sympathizes with them. He came to befriend sinners.

This thesis has argued that many believers seem to read the Gospels with a keener sense of Jesus' deity than his humanity. In doing so, they face the danger of minimizing his humanity and undermining his ability to sympathize completely with his people. Charles Spurgeon also recognized this inclination. Correcting ill-formed views of the humanity of Christ, he said,

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[1]J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Tigard, OR: Monergism Books, 2011), loc. 7811, Kindle.

[2]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 7816.

> Our temptation is to regard the Lord's humanity as something quite different from our own; we are apt to spiritualise it away, and not to think of him as really bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. All this is akin to grievous error; we may fancy that we are honouring Christ by such conceptions, but Christ is never honoured by that which is not true. He was a man, a real man, a man of our race, the Son of Man.[3]

If this tendency leads to reading the Gospels as if Jesus in his deity was unfazed by his circumstances or unaffected by the people around him then the Savior is dehumanized, robbed of dignity, and even emasculated in his ability to express sympathy and compassion to his people. Such an ill-formed Christology undercuts the sanctification process of the believer who grows in likeness to Christ by the transformative meditation on the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).[4]

Though believers might feel uncomfortable with a Savior that is too human, chapter 2 presented the point of view of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author belabored the point that Jesus is human in every way, yet without sin. In Hebrews 2:14-18 and in 4:14-5:10, he gives multiple arguments for and descriptions of Jesus' humanity. He also explores the implications of this strong solidarity and complete identification with mankind. Jesus had to become man so that he could fulfill the role of a perfect, great high priest and come to the aid of believing sinners.

Chapter 2 further demonstrated that in Philippians 2:5-11 Paul points to the incarnation as an example of the Savior's humility in his challenge to believers in Philippi to strive for unity and selflessness. As he extolls the example of Christ, he describes how the Eternal Son became man. He refused to use his divinity as an advantage or benefit to himself, but instead added a human nature that included adopting the position of a slave without rights or privileges. Furthermore, he fully experienced manhood in every natural way from a humble and even scandalous birth to an

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[3]C. H. Spurgeon, "The Man of Sorrows," in vol. 19 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 123, Logos.

[4]Brian S. Borgman, *Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 165, Kindle.

excruciating, scandalous death. He was in every form and manner human because he took on human nature to his already perfect divine nature.

The humanity of Christ and deity of Christ requires careful formulation and clear expression. Pastors, theologians, and those involved in soul-care at all levels need to understand the biblical teaching and, to a degree, the development of this doctrine. Therefore chapter 3 included a brief survey of the various councils that were necessary to reach consensus and clear biblical expression of the hypostatic union of the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ "without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation." Along the way various heresies had to be identified and excluded from mainstream Christianity. This exercise includes those heresies that undermined the deity of Christ such as Ebionism and Arianism as well as those that undermined his humanity, such as Docetism or Apollinarianism. Other false beliefs and formulations also had to be rejected such as Eutychianism which created an amalgam of both deity and humanity, and Nestorianism which essentially viewed Jesus as bipolar often switching between his two natures. Today the church fights against liberalism and other groups that would deny the deity of Christ outside her walls. However, she needs to guard against a *de facto* Docetism or Neo-Apollinarianism, both of which robs Jesus of a degree of his humanity by diminishing his human nature or assuming it to be a different form of humanity.[5] This misunderstanding also robs believers of a key resource in the battle for growth in Christlikeness.

In addition to understanding the development of theology about Christ through the early church age and the battle for a sound, clear definition of what the Bible affirms, it is also helpful for counselors and counselees alike to understand a few key terms in

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[5]See Harold Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 158; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 118; and Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), locs. 414, 425, 706, Kindle.

Christology. Concepts such as the communication of attributes, the *extra*, and the grave inadequacies of kenotic theory, both ontological and functional, are for this reason also explained in chapter 3. Finally, the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus—the primary contribution of Gerald Hawthorne—as well as the dependence of the human Jesus on the Father—a key contribution of Stephen Wellum—both give concrete models of how the Savior can truly be an example for believers to follow.

Chapters 4 through 6 focused on three categories of common-to-man problems—being weighed down with a heavy burden, facing disappointment with one's circumstances, and overcoming disappointment with people—and provided evidence that the Savior encountered such problems himself. Not only did the Savior experience such things, but he responded in a way that encourages and inspires his followers. Despite carrying a life-draining, soul-crushing, strength-sapping burden most of his life, he discharged his mission with submission and faith. Despite abandoning the perfections of heaven to encounter inequity and injustice first hand, he demonstrated obedience and compassion. Despite being used, forsaken, and betrayed by most and having to endure patiently the obtuseness of the disciples, the opposition of the Jewish leaders, and the misunderstanding of all, Jesus served with an absence of selfishness and with total self-control.

Additionally, chapters 4 through 6 looked at the emotional responses of Jesus as he interacted with these common-to-man problems. Again, readers of the Gospels might tend to downplay the emotional reactions of Jesus and fail to recognize the vast array of emotions he expressed. They might also be prone to moderate the intensity of these emotions. This moderation also robs Jesus of a key aspect of humanity and ability to relate to believers in their own troubles. Walter Hansen comments on the record found in the Gospels concerning the emotions of the Savior:

> The gospel writers paint their portraits of Jesus using a kaleidoscope of brilliant 'emotional' colors. Jesus felt *compassion*; he was *angry*, *indignant*, and *consumed with zeal*; he was *troubled*, *greatly distressed*, *very sorrowful*, *depressed*, *deeply*

moved, and *grieved*; he *sighed*; he *wept* and *sobbed*; he *groaned*; he was *in agony*; he was *surprised* and *amazed*; he *rejoiced very greatly* and was *full of joy*; he *greatly desired*, and he *loved*.

In our quest to be like Jesus we often overlook his emotions. Jesus reveals what it means to be fully human and made in the image of God. His emotions reflect the image of God without any deficiency or distortion. When we compare our own emotional lives to his, we become aware of our need for a transformation of our emotions so that we can be fully human, as he is.[6]

Jesus expressed a range of emotions as he dealt with the weight of a heavy burden, disappointing circumstances, and disappointing people. Recognizing and understanding these emotions that the Savior had helps believers process and biblically express their own emotional response to their own everyday problems.[7]

Understanding the humanity of Christ is especially needed in those countries where Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion.[8] Tragically, the Roman Catholic

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[6]G. Walter Hansen, "The Emotions of Jesus and Why We Need to Experience Them," *Christianity Today* 41, no. 2 (February 1997): 43, (emphasis original).

[7]To be clear, emotions are an essential dimension of humanity, but they must be sanctified and brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ just as all other aspects of the believer's life. For an explanation of emotions and a biblical proper biblical perspective see Borgman's *Feelings and Faith*. Borgman explains that "in the Bible, emotions are not amoral. We are responsible for how we feel, and we are expected to exercise self-control and have certain emotions. . . . Emotions are an inherent part of what it means to be a person; they express the values and evaluations of a person and influence motives and conduct. The emotions are more than feelings; they tell us about what we value and what we believe, producing desires and inclinations that affect our behavior" (Borgman, *Feelings and Faith,* 25-26). The establishment of a definition of emotions has proven to be challenging as most authors tend to list emotions rather than define the term itself. Jeff Forrey offers this definition, "Emotions are best understood as psychosomatic (whole-person) phenomena. They typically represent a certain assessment of a situation relative to the person's values, which, in turn, prompts a feeling state that motivates or prepares the person for a stereotypical behavioral response—again, relative to the person's values" (Jeff Forrey, "The Biblical Understanding and Treatment of Emotions," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald, Bob Kellemen, and Steve Viars (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 340. Sam Williams similarly defines emotion as "a fully personal (involving thoughts, beliefs, and judgments made about the environment and oneself) and somatic response to internal and/or external experience, subjectively experienced as some variety of feeling, which prepares the body and mind for action" (Sam Williams, "Toward a Theology of Emotion" *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 4 (2003): 60.

[8]I have been serving for 20 years in the predominantly Roman Catholic country of Croatia. The tragic misrepresentation of the Savior as a stern, distant, unattractive, and uninviting figure by Roman Catholicism and the need to correct this falsification of his person was one of the motivating factors in this study. Spurgeon deals with this false view of reaching the "heart" of Jesus through a mediator like Mary with these apt words: "He was affable, easily to be reached and ready to be entreated. The poor and the sick could readily move his heart to pity and his hand to help. He was called the friend of publicans and sinners, and of him it was said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." As a teacher Jesus was meek and lowly in heart, and therein was the very opposite of the scribes." C. H. Spurgeon, "The Heart of Jesus," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 196, Logos.

Church has created a picture of Jesus that is gross distortion of the original. He is neither appealing nor inviting if he is highlighted at all. Instead of seeing the Savior as a brother, a great high priest, or a friend to repentant sinners, he is viewed as so unpleasant that no one would be drawn to him or as a helpless infant in the arms of Mary. This distortion needs to be corrected. The study of the humanity of Christ and his unique ability to show sympathy for believers helps his followers grow in their relationship to him and their likeness to him. Certainly, there is much work to be done to correct this misrepresentation, in general. Further investigation into areas of identification with his brothers beyond those generally discussed here can help believers bridge their own lack of intimacy with Jesus Christ.

While the primary application in this thesis has been focused on counseling and helping believers who face common-to-man problems, the importance is not limited to those who need such occasional or *ad hoc* discipleship. Since meditation upon the glory of the Savior leads to growth in likeness to him and since his glory is seen both in his humanity (John 1:14) and his deity (John 17:5), this thesis has broader application to the realm of sanctification for all believers.

Finally, this study does not suggest a new method or wholesale correction in biblical counseling. Nevertheless, for many a reorientation or fine tuning of existing practices might be necessary. This thesis puts forward a correction that reminds counselors and counselees of a neglected emphasis. It seeks to recapture a focus that may be lost. It aims to enrich existing biblical counseling methods and the Christian life in general by drawing believers closer in relationship to Jesus Christ who is the center, object, and goal of their faith. As Ryle has emphasized

> He is the door—through Him we must enter. He is the Shepherd—we must hear His voice, and follow Him, if we would not perish in the wilderness. He is the Physician—we must apply to Him, if we would be healed of the plague of sin. He is the bread of life—we must feed on Him, if we would have our souls satisfied. He is the light—we must walk after Him, if we would not wander in darkness. He is the fountain—we must wash in His blood, if we would be cleansed, and made ready for

the great day of account.[9]

Next Steps

It would be inappropriate to conclude this study without suggesting concrete steps for the believer who wants to draw near to the Savior herself, for the beleaguered counselee who needs the comfort and succor of a faithful friend, or for the counselor who desires to enrich the life of others by strengthening their walk with Jesus.

While the material covered in these chapters might be a solid start, the follower of Christ needs to build on this foundation through their own active reading and observation of the Scriptures.[10] In addition to exercises and assignments mentioned in chapters 4 through 6, a reading plan that involves a pen and a journal (or whatever digital substitutes might be preferred) could be undertaken reading one or two chapters from the Gospels each day. First, the reader needs to ask honestly if he has the tendency to emphasize the deity of Christ at the expense of his humanity. Questions that could be kept in mind—even written out at the beginning of the study for ready reference—include the following: In what "common to man" situations did Jesus find himself in? What "common to man" experiences did he have? How did Jesus relate and respond to his circumstances and people? How did people relate to Jesus? Did they treat him as God or as a man, primarily? What resources did Jesus depend upon to help him fulfill his mission and obey the Father? How is Jesus' situation like situations I face? How can and should my reactions mirror his reactions?

Answers to these questions, additional observations from the text, and other points of contact between the believer and Jesus should be carefully noted. Conversational prayers could be written out or a length of time can be devoted to

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[9]Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, loc. 1700-1706.

[10]For a sample homework sheet see the appendix.

conversational prayer with Jesus.[11] A counselee struggling with a specific problem can write out resolutions based on how his response differs from Jesus in a similar situation and how he plans to respond in the future. Every few chapters, one can look back and choose a situation where they most identify with Jesus and study that passage in greater depth.

When one Gospel is finished, another Gospel can be started. Eventually, the reader might decide to use a harmony of the Gospels or other resources to enrich his understanding of the life of Christ.

In addition to reading the Gospels carefully, thoughtfully, and actively, a counselee can incorporate the book of Hebrews into her regular reading plan. She might read the whole book in the same way as suggested above for the Gospels or focus primarily on the passages that focus on Jesus as the Great High Priest.[12] The questions she could place before her as she reads and makes comments are: In what ways does the author compare Jesus to the rest of humanity? To what degree does Jesus identify with his followers? How was the humanity of Jesus demonstrated in his life on this earth? What are the implications of Jesus' solidarity with his followers? What are the benefits accrued to his followers?

In addition to personal reflection and observation on the Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews, a believer can commit to memory key verses that emphasize the nearness of the Savior to his followers. Verses touching the themes of the presence of God, the friendship of Jesus, and his identification with believers as a brother could also

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[11]"Conversational" here means natural, non-liturgical expressions to Jesus of what one is learning, feeling, desiring as one might converse with a friend. Expressions of thanksgiving and praise would also be appropriate. It is not suggested that a believer compose a two-sided conversation between himself and Jesus. While sanctified creativity can enhance our Christian experience, putting words into Jesus' mouth risks presumption and bringing Jesus down to one's level.

[12]For example, Heb 2:9-18; 3:1-6; 4:14-5:10; 6:19-20; 7:25-28; 8:1-3; 9:6-12; and 13:9-13.

be memorized.[13] Serious thought and reflection can also be given to the question: do I identify with Jesus Christ as my friend and am I growing in an intimate relationship with him? Believers often readily identify with a church or denomination ("I go to Grace." "I go to Clifton." "I am a Baptist."), with a doctrinal position ("I am reformed." "I am a five-pointer." "I am a non-cessationist."), a confession ("Westminster." "1689"), or even a ministry method ("I am an expositor." "I am a biblical counselor."). Labels certainly serve a purpose. However, dependence on labels may indicate a subtle, creeping preoccupation with knowledge about the Savior as a substitute for knowledge of the Savior.

Another helpful resource can be the renewal of one's mind through singing and making melody in one's heart with songs that focus on the themes of Jesus' friendship and presence. Many older songs that focus on these themes seem to have fallen into disuse though some are being reintroduced with contemporary melodies. Alongside classics like "Hallelujah, what a Savior!" and "What a friend we have in Jesus," there are other hymns that emphasize the nearness of Jesus and his friendship and willingness to receive believing sinners. "No, not One" "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy," "I stand amazed," and even "Lily of the Valley" all can stir up a believer's heart to draw near to the Savior anew.[14]

Answering Invitations

A note of caution should be sounded. Hopefully these exercises will help a believer walk more closely with Christ and enrich the process of putting off ungodliness

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[13]For instance, Pss 16:11; 46:1; 73:25, 28; John 15:15; Rom 8:28-29; and Heb 2:11.

[14]One does not have to accept the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon to affirm that Christ is outstanding among his class or "the fairest of ten-thousand." While believers do need to be very concerned about the poor hermeneutics found in some hymns, they should also be free to use similar figurative expressions in their personal faith. Likewise, unstrained sentimentality can be a danger, but sentimentality informed by sound theology can serve to warm up the cold orthodoxy of some or enliven a distant relationship for others. If lyrics are truly problematic, then appropriate adjustments can be made.

and putting on the character of Christ. It might even lead to a deeper level of intimacy with the Savior. However, as in many things in the Christian life, the follower of Christ must guard against imbalance and the possibility of emphasizing the humanity of Christ at the expense of his deity. This imbalance could lead into kenoticism. Jesus, though a friend and a brother, remains "the Lord . . . high and lifted up" (Isa 6:1, cf. John 12:41), the Eternal God (Mic 5:2), the "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14), and the judge of the living and the dead (John 5:22). As his followers, Christian must labor to see his glory both in his deity and his humanity.

Nevertheless, understanding that Jesus has entered fully into the human experience of believers, into their joy and their sorrow, into their victories and their griefs, into their burdens, disappointments, circumstances, and relationships, encourages believers to consider in a new light Jesus' invitations and commands to come to him.[15] When Christ says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:28-29), he is opening his own arms to weary sinners. He invites them to *himself*.[16] Likewise, when the writer of Hebrews states, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16), he encourages needy sinners to approach an open and inviting royal chamber. Believers can tarry with confidence and assurance

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[15]C. H. Spurgeon says concerning the comprehensive identification of the Savior with believers, "I offer, then, to you . . . this very comforting reflection,—in Christ's sufferings, you are quite certain to find something akin to your own; and, in Christ's heart, you are quite sure to find a deep well of divine sympathy; so you need not hesitate to go to him, or doubt that his loving heart will overflow with sympathy towards you, whatever your trial may be." C. H. Spurgeon, "Christ's Sympathy with His People," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 50 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1904), 255, Logos.

[16]This awareness and recognition can help a counselee avoid falling into the trap of living her faith through a surrogate relationship to Christ. That is to say, often a counselee can become dependent on the counselor and not to the Lord himself. Certainly, there is an appropriate time to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2), however a counselee should also engage in self-examination and ask herself periodically, "Is my first inclination when problems come to run to Jesus in prayer and his truth, or to run to my counselor?" The counselor must direct people to Christ and not create dependency on herself.

that they are welcomed and received. The king has extended his scepter. He invites because he understands and identifies as a fellow sufferer, a friend, a brother, and a sympathetic high priest. This king was also a man of sorrows. Spurgeon explains:

> All the sufferings of the body and of the soul were known to him; the sorrows of the man who actively struggles to obey; the sorrows of the man who sits still, and passively endures. The sorrows of the lofty he knew, for he was the King of Israel; the sorrows of the poor he knew, for he "had not where to lay his head." Sorrows relative, and sorrows personal; sorrows mental, and sorrows spiritual; sorrows of all kinds and degrees assailed him. Affliction emptied his quiver upon him, making his heart the target for all conceivable woes.[17]

Such sorrows Jesus experienced as a man. Therefore, he is near, available and "able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb 2:18).

[17]Spurgeon, "The Man of Sorrows," 128.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE HOMEWORK FORM FOR LESSONS FROM
THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

"Common to man" problems	**Examples of Jesus' experience of these problems**	**Lessons to Learn: How is Jesus' situation like mine? How did Jesus respond?**	**Steps I will take**
Carrying a Burden			
Facing an unavoidable, difficult situation	Ps 22; Isa 53		
Facing a looming trial	Luke 12:50; John 12:27		
Facing an imminent threat	Matt 26:37-38; Mark 14:33-34; Luke 22:43-44		
Disappointment with Circumstances			
Economic instability	Matt 2:13-14; Luke 9:58		
Imposition from others	Matt 8:18; 9:23-25; 20:29-31; Mark 1:35-43; 2:4; 3:7-9; 8:1-2;		
Lack of appreciation or cooperation	Matt 9:30; Mark 1:40-45; 7:36-37		
Opportunism	John 7:1-9		
Personal attacks	Matt 11:18-19; 27:42; Mark 14:58; John 8:41, 48; 9:24; 10:20		
Violation of rights	Matt 26:57-27:31; Mark 14:43-15:20; Luke 22:47-23:25		
Disappointment with People			
Taunting by family	John 7:1-9		
Manipulation by loved ones	John 2:1-12		
Questioned by friends/colleagues	Matt 11:2-6		
Rejection by nation and his own hometown	Matt 13:54-58; Luke 4:16-30; John 6:66-71		
Misunderstood by closest associates	Matt 18:1-5; 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-40		

APPENDIX 2

CASE STUDIES

Below are three sets of sample case studies corresponding to chapters 4 through 6 which can be used in conjunction with the previous appendix. These case studies are designed to remind the believer that Christ understands the sorrow and disappointments they suffer, but also remained faithful and sinless despite such setbacks. Knowing that the Savior understands and is also a close resource can help draw them closer to the man of sorrows who stands ready to receive them and offer them mercy and grace.

Bearing a Burden

1. Tom and Sharon, a godly couple active in their church, share in your Friday night Bible study that they had heard earlier in the week that their son, Sam, had recently disclosed to them that he now rejects the faith in which he was raised, a faith that he had professed himself. Sharon is clearly distraught as she describes how they put the pieces together and realized that not only had Sam not been in church all semester, but that he had been lying to them and had begun to party, drink, and simply wanted to enjoy college without the restraints of "old-fashioned" religion. Tom seems distant, yet exhausted, as Sharon unburdens herself to the group.

2. Rose, a single, middle-aged woman with a debilitating genetic disease who lives in constant, paralyzing pain with no hope of a cure has been referred to you for counseling. She shares the difficulty of living with increasing pain, the crushing despair that she must face this situation alone. "Who would marry me?" she mutters aloud but almost to herself. She also expresses the constant guilt of having to depend upon

members of the church for help.

3. You call Greg to find out the results of his recent tests. In the long pause as you wait for him to answer, you brace yourself for bad news. He quietly explains that the test results show that he has an aggressive brain cancer and has only been given a few months to live. He insists that he is at peace but admits that his young wife, Alexandra, is really struggling and cannot face their three young children.

Questions

1. As Tom and Sharon watch Sam "reap a whirlwind" of painful consequences, how can the fact that Jesus carried a burden help them draw near to God? How can Jesus' experience comfort them as they face the embarrassment they might feel before others? When they examine their hearts and grieve over their mistakes as parents, possibly even give into temptation to blame one another, how can they be encouraged that God does not hold these mistakes against them? How does the solidarity of Jesus with them and his nearness to them, get them through the disappointing discoveries that tomorrow might bring?

2. When Rose arises each morning from a restless night and with no relief in her pain, how can the response of Jesus, whose burden grew each day as his death drew closer, encourage her? How does his example help her see past her shrinking, lonely existence? Can Jesus' sympathy give her strength as she holds fast to the promise that Jesus has neither left her or abandoned her? Rather than dwell on the incongruities of life as she compares herself with others, how can you help her look to Jesus, who patiently, faithfully, and selflessly bore his burden and now enjoys the Father's reward?

3. As you face and exhausted young Alexandra who confesses that she dreads the sleepless nights after she has put her three children to bed, how can you encourage her to consider the sleepless night that her Savior spent alone praying for a different path for himself? What hope will you offer to remind her that she can submit her will to a good Father fully aware that the path before her will be painful and difficult? How do you

restore her confidence that the Savior who is alongside her and to whom she pours out her heart, also knew well the pain and difficulty before him?

In each of these cases how does the example of the Savior's perseverance and submission while still bearing a burden motivate them to stay focused on God's promises and not to withdraw into selfish, brooding preoccupation with their problems?

Disappointment in Circumstances

1. Your wife wants to invite Corrine over for dinner. She is concerned about her seemingly depressed state. Corrine is a 36-year-old Christian woman who never married, but clearly wants to be. All the ladies her age in the church are married and have kids, Corrine feels like she does not have anything in common with them, or anyone. She is becoming increasingly less involved in the church, and seems resigned to dying a single, old maid.

2. You notice that Frank seems on edge on Friday night. Though never the life of the party, he seems irritated and snaps at some of the other guys as you joke around and enjoy dessert after Bible study. You invite him for coffee on Monday. He confides to you that he has been by-passed again for a promotion. He has no prospect of getting a raise and with a second child starting college he just cannot make ends meet anymore. You have always known Frank to be a hard-worker. He wonders aloud if it is worthwhile to serve the Lord at the end of the day.

3. Dan gives a stirring report of his mission work over the past eight years and everyone seems encouraged. You offer to take him out to breakfast before he leaves town the next morning. In the course of the conversation, he confides in you that he has begun to struggle to get out of bed some days and feels like he has lost his orientation on the field. He has no like-minded co-workers on the field. He was sure in Bible college that God would use him to do great things, but he sees almost no fruit to his ministry and it seems like his sacrifices that his family have made mean nothing to God.

Questions

With what episodes in the life of Christ can these believers identify? How does the fact that he faced disappointing circumstances in his life help them? Is there evidence that these frustrated believers think that God owes them for their service and faithfulness? Have they unwittingly equated success and ease with God's blessing or approval? How can you help them fight the daily battle against the pull of bitterness, second-guessing of themselves, and even guilt and yet still encourage them to examine their own hearts?

What passages help them to focus on the glory of the Savior and his perfect obedience and relentless compassion despite their trying and unjust circumstances? How do you break their patterns of thinking so that they do not let their current circumstances begin to define them and their attitudes make their current situations worse? How does his response to unreasonable circumstances help them resist the temptation to bitterness?

Disappointment in People

1. Someone points out in Sunday school that Ray and Clara, long-time members of the church, have not been to church for three weeks. In fact, no one has heard from them at all. After a few attempts you finally get Clara on the phone. You ask how they are doing. She blurts out, "Ray told me two weeks ago that he never loved me and that he wants out of our marriage. He's gone, and I haven't left the house since." They had been married 34 years.

2. Donnie calls you in a rage. He keeps repeating, "She said 'Before God these witnesses,' man, 'before God and these witnesses.'" Once you finally get him to settle down, he explains that he came home from a business trip a day early to surprise his wife for their six-month anniversary. He found he with an old boyfriend in his own bedroom.

3. You get a call from a friend who serves as an elder in a church in another town. He tells you that his long-term pastor has been exposed as a fraud having had multiple adulterous affairs with women over many years in other states and even prostitutes. The church is devastated. Older believers are angry. A few new believers are

questioning the value of Christianity and even their own faith. Can you come as soon as possible to preach a word of comfort to these shocked brothers and sisters?

Questions

In what ways does Jesus understand and identify with hurt that comes through betrayal? Though he was never married and never had physical children, how might he provide comfort to those who have experienced betrayal in such relationships?

What incidents can you think of where people sinned against Jesus? What temptations that come as a response to relational sin do you think he faced? How does the perfection of Jesus make relational sin more difficult for him to bear? Sometimes believers sin against other believers in public, shameful, and cruel ways. Sometimes these public betrayals reveal the inauthenticity of a believer's profession. How does the public, shameful, and cruel sin of a believer or against a believer affect the Savior? (Cf. Psa 51:5).

When the church of Jesus Christ suffers due to the spurious character of a pastor who has been exposed as a moral and spiritual fraud, how does this affect Jesus Christ to whom the church is a bride? Does he understand the sorry of his people? Is he indignant at such hypocrisy?

How does the Savior's example of relentless service and unselfish focus on others provide a motivation and template for believers who have suffered betrayal? As they face the temptation to withdraw, to be bitter, or to lash out in anger, how can his patient, selfless obedience to the Father provide encouragement to them?

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ABSTRACT

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR: HOW A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST HELPS BELIEVERS DRAW NEAR TO THEIR SAVIOR

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This thesis argues that a key resource in sanctification is meditation on the glory of the Lord. Believers need a balanced view of Jesus' glory in his humanity and in his deity. Nevertheless, many believers tend to focus on the Christ's deity while diminishing his humanity. Furthermore, most biblical counseling resources lightly address the important applications of Christ's humanity.

Chapter 2 provides exegesis from three passages (Heb 2:14-18 and Heb 4:14-5:10; Phil 2:5-8) that explain the reasons for and the implications of the Incarnation. A survey of the development of the church's understanding of Christology as well as key concepts in Christology and current solutions to the dual nature of Christ is presented in chapter 3.

Chapters 4 through 6 look at three common problems—carrying a personal burden, disappointment in circumstances, and disappointment in people—which the Savior experienced himself. His reactions to these common situations emotionally and volitionally is investigated as an incentive to walk more closely with a sympathetic Savior and to follow an obedient Lord.

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