

## Worthy of dishonor

WHY THE APOSTLES WANTED TO SUFFER FOR THEIR LORD—AND HOW THEY DID IT

**“Calling the apostles to them, and lashing them, they charge them not to be speaking in the name of Jesus and release them. They went from the face of the Sanhedrin, then, rejoicing that they were deemed worthy to be dishonored for the sake of the Name.” —Acts 5:40-41**

John suddenly recalled the ninth point of His Lord’s great sermon: “Happy are you whenever they should be reproaching and persecuting you, and saying every wicked thing against you, on my account. Rejoice and exult, for your wages are vast in the heavens” (Mt. 5:11-12).



It was not only the vast heavenly wages that excited these men, but the vast love they held for their Master. They had

broken bread with Him more than once since His resurrection seven weeks prior, and now, as their teaching gained converts in Jerusalem, the same Sanhedrin that condemned Jesus sought *their* harm. All suffering for sin had been accomplished by Jesus. What remained was the privilege of suffering for *His* sake.

Humans can escape the hardest edge of severe pain by beholding, in the mind’s eye, some wondrous thing. Our Lord Himself endured the cross, not by sheer might of will, but “for the joy lying before Him” (Heb. 12:2). As the lashes fell, the apostles pictured Christ. Afterward, they practically floated from the building, whooping for joy. Well, spiritual glory is just as real as the brain-flooding endogenous opioid polypeptide compounds given us by God, known as endorphins.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endorphin>

# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

*“If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong” --1 Cor. 13:1-2*



Two out of three isn't bad.

## The humiliation of Christ



As many of you know, I used to stare at the crucifix that hung above the altar at the Catholic church I grew up in. I have often wondered about the horrible death of Christ. Why did it have to be so bad? Yes, I understand the necessity of Christ dying for the sins

of the world, but couldn't He have slipped away quietly in His sleep? At worst, let the unbelieving Jews stone Him; that was the Hebrew brand of capital punishment. Wouldn't that have been sufficiently sacrificial to deliver us from our trespasses?

Well, all right. I don't like it, but let's say that Christ had to die at the hands of the nations. Let's say—against all my protests—that He had to suffer the worst death imaginable: crucifixion. Just put Him on the cross, then, and let it be finished. But no. There are the preliminaries. He must first be beaten to within an inch of His life before an audience of indifferent spectators. But there are preliminaries even to this. He must be blindfolded, spun around, struck in the face,

made to guess who hit Him, dressed in a purple robe, “sceptered” with a sickly reed, knelt to in abject mockery, “kinged” with thorns, spat upon, manually de-bearded, bound with rope, and then paraded through the slums of Jerusalem.

Why? Dear God—*Why?*

I think I know. It is found in the phrases, “the cross of Christ,” and “the word of the cross.”

**“For Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ may be made void. For the word of the cross is stupidity, indeed, to those who are perishing, yet to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”**

—1 Cor. 1:17-18

“The *cross* of Christ” and “the word of the *cross*” is a purposeful emphasis of the manner of Christ’s death. The *way* it happened is vitally important.

Notice how Paul distinguishes between baptizing and bringing the evangel of the cross. He is setting forth baptism *in opposition* to the cross. Baptism is a human work. By contrast, all hu-

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## ANATOMY OF HUMILIATION

Inherently in the form of God.....empties Himself  
Equal with God.....takes the form of a slave  
All authority His.....becomes obedient  
All created in Him.....dies on a cross



Colossians 1:16/Philippians 2:6-8

## ...the humiliation of Christ

(Continued from pg. 1)

man work ceases at the cross. Why? Because any God-fearing human beholding Christ's passion becomes too transfixed to move. He cannot run away to be baptized because his legs do not work. He devises no deeds because his mind is paralyzed. The humiliations and pains dealt



Christ are so shocking that the God-fearing human cannot even recall what his own past accomplishments might have been. When the nails go through the Son of God's wrist bones, the witness's own hands flinch and go numb. When the feet of God's Son are forcibly arranged one on top the other and driven through simultaneously with three powerful hammer strikes, the witness's own feet fail, dropping him to his knees.

When the Son of God says, "It is finished," the witness is also finished. Then, when the bearded chin of the crucified One hits His chest, all is confirmed.

This is what it means to be baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3).

When Jesus Christ lay inert on the stone for

three days, His chest did not rise once; He was dead. During this period, our bodies also lay inert—figuratively speaking—for we died with Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). Dead people cannot run and work for God; not even Christ could run and work for God during those three days.

But after the three days, God roused Christ from the dead. When Christ opened His eyes and felt the facecloth against His eyelashes, it all came back to Him. He felt such relief then. Not only was He breathing again, but after all the millennia of waiting, He had finally accomplished the cross. He lay there for a moment to savor that thought. Now that the worst was over, all that remained was glory upon glory. And of course, seeing His Father again.

When Jesus Christ swung His legs around the edge of the slab, unwrapped Himself, raised Himself up, and walked out into the new world, we did likewise. We walked out with Him into newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Newness of life does not mean working for salvation. If it did, then Christ Himself would be working again for salvation, a thing He is not about to do; it was too hard the first time. Newness of life means blinking into a new world that is finally and fully sacrificed for. Newness of life means thanking God that the shocking sacrifice is finished, never to be repeated.

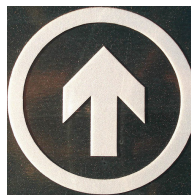
Newness of life means doing whatever good one's hand finds to do, for this is God's gift to us since every human failure has been died for. ■

## Striving for a better resurrection

There is such a thing as a better resurrection. It was my father-in-law Art who, in 1982, first brought this to my attention. I used to think that rising from the dead was rising from the dead. Good enough, right? I mean, you're immortal; what more could you want? I soon realized that the quantum leap from mortality to life without end is potentially different for some. For some, it's a quantum leap times a hundred, possibly even a thousand.

The verse Art directed me to was Hebrews 11:31-35. The writer begins by naming heroes of Israel and their mighty deeds and deliverances: Rahab, Gideon, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and others. These escaped the edge of the sword, becoming strong in battle. Other heroes obtained less glorious ends. Verse 35:

**"Now others are flogged, not anticipating deliverance, that they may be happening upon a better resurrection."**



## What a Revelation!

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS ARE NOT NECESSARILY SATANISTS

**"For many are walking, of whom I often told you, yet now am lamenting also as I tell it, who are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose consumption is destruction, whose god is their bowels, and whose glory is in their shame, who to the terrestrial are disposed." —Phil. 3:18-19**

The funny/not funny thing about this verse is that enemies of the cross of Christ may very well appear to be friends of Jesus. These may be those described by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:2 as "believing feignedly." They laud the name of Jesus, but reject the suffering and the humiliation (that is, the cross) of Christ.

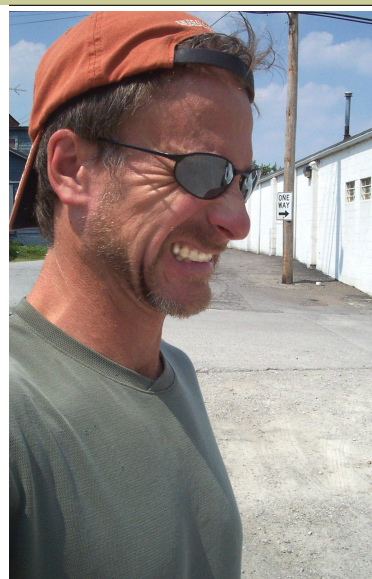


Popularity, not suffering, is the keynote of Christendom. The Christian religion is as popular today as the Beatles were in 1965. Most modern churches satisfy the emotions (that is, the soul—typified in the above verse by "bowels"), rather than the spirit. Invisible, celestial blessings are ignored for tangible, terrestrial feelings—whatever tingles the spine. What is thought to be glorious in the church today (human free will, eternal torment) is in reality shameful.

In the above verse from Philippians, "destruction" is the Greek word, *apollumi*, meaning, "loss." A Christian in name only (that is, a poser) loses eonian life. (2 Thess. 1:8). Believers who believe in Jesus but who are enemies of the cross of Christ, are saved, but lose eonian reward (1 Cor. 3:15). Those who were Christians in name only will still be with God for eternity by virtue of the cross they rejected, but they will miss the glory of the eons. On the bright side, they will have enjoyed some top-notch Christian music.

# Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



## My fake job for Christ

Over 600 of you now subscribe to the CGN. I know that doesn't sound like a lot in the era of American Idol, but I'm thrilled. The numbers increase every week. We're headed toward 1000. Maybe 2000. Maybe a million.

Nobody cares here in my town. In my town, I'm an enigma at best. At worst, I'm a weirdo. I take that back. One lady thinks I'm a cult leader. When I run into her at the post office, she looks the other way. I say hello, and she says good-bye. It's the opposite of the Beatles song.

Because I work at home, few people think I work. My wife tells people I write about God. "Is he a pastor?" No. "Does he go to church?" No. "Who buys his books?" Um, people. "Can't he get a *real* job?" He already has a real job. "But what does he do?" He writes about God. "Is he a pastor...?"

### Some people have *real* jobs



I finally gave Melody some books to give to her co-workers, and a six-page history explaining this ministry. It was like dropping an anvil into Sheol. One cocks one's ear and listens for the sound. Three minutes goes by, then 300 years. Hm.

"Yes, but what does he actually *do*?"

Oh, they'll find out. They'll find out at the resurrection

of the dead. In the resurrection of the dead, they will say, "We thought he was a bum, but look at him now!" It will be a Joseph moment: "Geez o' Pete, *you've* come a long way!" Since it will be the resurrection of the dead, I probably won't be as sarcastic as I am now. I probably won't say, "What's the matter? Can't you get a real job?"

There are so many ways to suffer evil for the sake of the evangel, and I am finally learning to revel in each and every one of them. Humiliation gets easier as the day of immortality draws nigh. Now if I can just get the lady who thinks I'm a cult leader to whack me over the head a few times with her purse, I'll be set. ■

## ...a better resurrection

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Israelites abused for their faith will have a better resurrection, yes, even better than David's. This agrees with our Lord's words to the disciples on the Mount (*see pg. 1*), when He told them that persecution and reproach would mean "vast wages" in heaven.

That's the Circumcision evangel. What about the evangel of Paul? Are all resurrections the same in the body of Christ?

**"There are bodies celestial as well as bodies terrestrial. But a different glory, indeed, is that of the celestial, yet a different that of the terrestrial, another glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star is excelling star in glory. Thus also is the resurrection of the dead." —1 Cor. 15:15-40-42.**

All resurrections are *not* the same in the body of Christ. Some "stars" excel other "stars." There are some who will rule and reign with Christ, having positions of great authority, while others will merely be saved. What makes the difference? Suf-

fering humiliation—and staying under it. Tasting the shame of the cross—and staying under it.

**"For if we died together, we shall be living together also; if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also." —2 Tim. 2:11-12**

Those who died together with Christ receive eonian life. This is the common faith. Reigning, however, requires endurance. To endure requires suffering. Becoming a member of the most popular religion on earth is not suffering; getting ridiculed by the members of that religion, *is*. Being looked down upon as a heretic or being abandoned by friends and, yes, even family members, is acute suffering. Staying *under* the suffering and not seeking escape—that is enduring.

To those now suffering for the faith, I say: For heaven's sake, don't quit now. The better resurrection is coming. ■

