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Chapter 1 : The paradox of the cross in the thought of St Paul - Old Colony Library Network

The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St. Paul Volume 17 of Journal for the study of the New Testament: Supplement series Volume 17 of Jsnt Supplement Series, Journal for the study of the New Testament.

Paul explains the meaning of suffering By Brian Pizzalato Two questions have plagued the minds of Christians and non-Christians alike: Why does God allow suffering? There is one person who stands out above all to give an answer to these deepest of questions, namely St. Paul writes so much on suffering: In the next column we will consider his outward focus, namely, his view on how his suffering affects others. However, he now considers this gain to be loss and refuse, compared to gaining Christ through his sufferings. Suffering is a participation in the mystery of Christ and is the way Paul can become like Christ. Through his suffering, Paul sees himself as participating in the Passion of Christ. Because we are being saved through the death and resurrection of Christ we must participate in his Passion to obtain salvation. We see elsewhere in Philippians this notion of imitating Christ being gain for Paul, whether in death or life. For Paul to live is gain because while he suffers in this life he is imitating Christ and becoming more Christ-like. Further, to live is gain because while Paul lives he can spread the faith and be an example for the Christian community. So whether he lives and suffers, leading to the resurrection for himself and others, or dies and shares in the resurrection himself alone, he will be united to Christ and be an example for all. It is in weakness that we are more apt to trust in Christ because we realize that what we accomplish is not of our own doing, but the grace of Christ is working in us. Furthermore, it is in our weakness and suffering that we grow in humility and cannot pride ourselves in our accomplishments. We receive here an insight into the effectiveness of grace. Grace helps us to participate in the salvific act of suffering and to be content with it. Paul reveals to us the paradox of the cross. To be crucified usually means death, but for Paul it means Christ living in him. In suffering, when united to Christ, death now means life. This is why he says in 1 Corinthians: There is this intimate bond between the cross, the epitome of the sufferings of Christ, and the suffering of the people which is a participation in the self-same cross. Thus participation in the cross through suffering is a way of obtaining grace, the power of God to participate in salvation. This is also why Paul can say elsewhere in Galatians: Brian Pizzalato is the Director of Catechesis, R. He is also a faculty member of the Theology and Philosophy departments of the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham.

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Chapter 2 : The Paul Paradox

*The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of calendrierdelascience.com (JSNT supplement) [Anthony Tyrrell Hanson] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Great copy - pages clean and unmarked - paperback cover in great shape.*

Christianity , discipleship , eternal life , Faith , Jesus Christ , love , paradox , sacrifice If there is a theme that is running through our Scripture readings in Lent this year, it is this: A paradox is simply a statement or proposition that, despite sound reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that is senseless, self-contradictory, or illogical. As foolishness, a stumbling block, he said, for Jews and for Gentiles. This is the case today for many, many people around the world. A paradox such as a crucified Messiah just seems senseless, illogical. How can you worship a king who has been flogged and put to death? We also find other paradoxes in the teaching of Jesus. Blessings pronounced on the poor, the mourning, and the meek? How does that teaching fit with the world in which we live, where we marginalize or exploit the poor, avoid those who mourn, and walk all over the meek as we climb our way to the top?! Jesus, as we encounter him today, is in Jerusalem, in the Temple, during the Passover festival. The events recorded by John happen on what we know as Palm Sunday. The Passover, one of the major feasts in Judaism, one that required devout Jews to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival, the city was teeming with visitors from all around Judea and beyond. It is interesting and, for the Greeks, troubling, what Jesus has to say to these Greeks. Consider this day, Palm Sunday. But Jesus knows that he has not come to fulfill any political agenda, has not come to deliver a military victory. He is in Jerusalem because this is the place he will be arrested, and beaten, and crucified. This is the story he briefly shares with the Greeks. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? I have come to die. I am the grain of wheat that falls to the earth and dies. If you want to follow me, you must hate your life in this world. I would probably get up and walk away. Paradox is at the heart of the Christian faith, and many people are uncomfortable with paradox of any variety, much less the religious type. Hating my life to save it? You see, we are very temporal, very materialistic creatures. We relate more fully to this world of time measured in seconds and minutes and hours, of things we can touch and see and obtain and possess. Jesus speaks of eternal life—back in John 3: And here, again, Jesus speaks of this eternal life, the gift received for those who hate, who reject, life in this world. There are a couple of points to be made in this paradox. Too often we live our lives as if they were a precious commodity that was meant to be hoarded and saved. We become miserly in our living, quite literally with our money, which we save up only for the purpose of acquiring more things selfish or in the hope of furthering our financial security. This is why we tithe to the Church, why we support other charitable organizations, and beyond that, why we give ourselves away in love to others. It is the greatest of human tragedies—really, divine tragedies—when I encounter those who are unable to forgive after they have been hurt. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. He is our model, and calls us to be ready to give ourselves away, to hate this life, so that we might have eternal life. And what is eternal life? Is it just an endless quantity of life, life that just goes on and on and on? That is not the eternal life of which Jesus speaks. It is a quality of life that cannot be measured; as we might say, it is both quantity and quality. But this eternal life can only be offered if Jesus fulfills the purpose for which he came. He is agonizing over the events to come later in the week on Good Friday, when he will not only physically be beaten, but when he is laid on the cross he will bear the burden of the sins of the world, past, present, and future. He will experience fully the wrath of God—for our sake. He will pay the debt that is ours. He will be humiliated—but he will be glorified. In his death on the cross Jesus is obeying and glorifying the Father. Rather than tragedy, God declares, in the crucifixion of Christ, the greatest victory

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over sin and death. We are called to stand with him in his humiliation, to proclaim with boldness and joy that indeed we are followers of the crucified and risen Lord. We are called to elevate the meek, those who mourn, the poor, the marginalized, to love those who are difficult to love, to forgive when the transgression seems too great. We are to risk being fools for Christ. If we really have seen Jesus, then we, too, have to be willing to be a seed buried in the ground, and allowing Christ to live in us, we can bring life and hope and restoration to others. But we have to embrace the paradox: The question I leave with you is this:

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Chapter 3 : O Paradox of Paradoxes! A Reflection on the Feast Day of the Holy Cross - Saint Sophia

*The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St Paul (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement) [Anthony Tyrrell Hanson] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers.*

For the original site with Greek and graphics, go to: With the sole exception of the eucharistic formula at I-Cor 10:16-17, indeed furthermore, he never even once alludes to the detailed biographical panorama, from the Nativity up to the Passion, which fills the pages of the canonical Gospels. This is, on the face of it, a most puzzling omission. For an objective, philosophical reading of the documents would seem to reveal a number of logical contradictions, both within his biography and also between his theology and that of the Evangelists. It must be emphasized that these anomalies are conceptual rather than empirical in nature. For although they of course occur in interwoven historical, theological and normative contexts within the NT, they nevertheless present themselves as a priori problems of analytical consistency between various texts--regardless of the truth or falsity of any factual claims being made or presumed by those texts. In sum, and stated more formally: Neither is this the place to provide a retrospective survey of the many past commentaries on these complex questions. Paul nevertheless proclaims to the Athenians that God inhabits no sanctuary made by human hands. On the other hand, the secular authorities with all their weaponry including Mk 8:19 Paul notwithstanding permits a continuation of marriage among the Disciples. Indeed the word at Mt 23:17: Were not John the Baptist and Christ both thus consecrated from birth? Are we to love our enemies or excoriate them? In any event, even if Christ referred to that custom parabolically--as in Th 5:2 he certainly did not forbid its physical practice. Later, Mariam Magdalene as first witness! This is not a teaching of mere female submissiveness or keeping quiet in the Convocation! Paul emphatically opposes any liberated role for females. This subject must be carefully distinguished from that of forgiveness--both among humans and between God and humankind--as a pre-eminently innovative tenet in the Gospels. For of course absolution logically presupposes a transgression of the rules, not their abrogation; compare e. Ezek 18 with Mt 6:16-18; Gen 49, Jud 2: The irony of course is that the Gospels themselves, of which tradition Paul was evidently ignorant, were ultimately only preserved by the Pauline Church, which also disseminated the very OT which Paul himself had disdained--thus accomplishing the globalization of the canonical Bible. This in turn may hopefully serve to stimulate a discussion both of the apostolic status of Saul of Tarsus and thus of his inclusion in the canon. These basic questions cannot be papered over, nor can they be settled by institutional fiat. For their illuminating implication is that traditional Christianity--as defined by the classical NT canon including both Gospels and Epistles--is logically self-contradictory and hence inherently unstable. According to Jerome, Peter [in Gal 2:11-14] On the other hand, Paul in like manner made a pretense of blaming him, in order to avoid scandalizing the Gentiles, whose Apostle he was. But Augustine disapproves of this solution. It seemed to me that, concerning what St. Paul says about the confinement of women--which has been stated to me recently, and even previously I had heard that this would be the will of God--[the Lord] said to me: It is not in the epistles we are to learn what are the fundamental articles of faith, where they are promiscuously and without distinction mixed with other truths. We shall find and discern those great and necessary points best in the preaching of our Savior and the Apostles. Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher* Paul letter to Gilbert West, We should never finish, were we to relate all the contradictions which are to be found in the writings attributed to St. Paul. Generally speaking it is St. Paul did not join the nascent society of the Christians, which at that time was half-Jewish. Is it possible to excuse Paul for having reprimanded Peter? What would be thought today of a man who intended to live at our expense, he and his woman, judge us, punish us, and confound the guilty with the innocent? The Messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law, It rests with every professor of the religion of Jesus to settle with himself, to which of the two religions, that of Jesus or that of Paul, he will adhere. The only question comes to be how the Apostle Paul appears in his Epistles to be so indifferent to the historical facts of the life of Jesus. He

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bears himself but little like a disciple who has received the doctrines and the principles which he preaches from the Master whose name he bears. It does not appear that the opinion of St. Paul, all things considered, ought to alter our opinion derived from the evangelists. It is necessary not to be Christian to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ. In Christ the religious is completely present-tense; in Paul it is already on the way to becoming doctrine. One can imagine the rest! This trend has been kept up for God knows how many centuries. When Jesus Christ lived, he was indeed the prototype. The task of faith is Now, through the Apostle Paul, comes a basic alteration He draws attention away from imitation and fixes it decisively upon the death of Christ the Atoner. What Luther failed to realize is that the true situation is that the Apostle [Paul] has already degenerated by comparison with the Gospel. It becomes the disciple who decides what Christianity is, not the master, not Christ but Paul, Benjamin Jowett, The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans Our conception of the Apostolical age is necessarily based on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. It is in vain to search ecclesiastical writings for further information Confining ourselves, then, to the original sources, we cannot but be struck by the fact, that of the first eighteen years after the day of Pentecost, hardly any account is preserved to us It seems as if we had already reached the second stage in the history of the Apostolic Church, without any precise knowledge of the first. Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit There was the dreary Sunday of his childhood, when he sat with his hands before him, scared out of his senses by a horrible tract which commenced business with the poor child by asking him, why he was going to perdition? John Stuart Mill, On Liberty The Gospel always refers to a pre-existing morality, Paul, a declared enemy to this Judaical mode of interpreting the doctrine Ernest Renan, Saint Paul True Christianity, which will last forever, comes from the Gospels, not from the epistles of Paul. The writings of Paul have been a danger and a hidden rock, the causes of the principal defects of Christian theology. If slavery prevailed in the days of the Apostle Paul, this was precisely because the churches which originated then were not yet perfect, as we perceive from the Epistles of the Apostle himself. However, those members of the congregations who, individually, attained perfection no longer owned or could have had slaves, because these became brethren, and a brother, a true brother, cannot have a brother as his slave. This child born of the son of the devil and of a holy woman Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dawn The story of one of the most ambitious and obtrusive of souls, of a head as superstitious as it was crafty, the story of the Apostle Paul--who knows this, except a few scholars? Without this strange story, however, without the confusions and storms of such a head, such a soul, there would be no Christianity. Leo Tolstoy, My Religion The separation between the doctrine of life and the explanation of life began with the preaching of Paul who knew not the ethical teachings set forth in the Gospel of Matthew, and who preached a metaphisico-cabalistic theory entirely foreign to Christ; and this separation was perfected in the time of Constantine, when it was found possible to clothe the whole pagan organization of life in a Christian dress, and without changing it to call it Christianity. Attempts have been made to conceive The so-called Epistles of Paul As Saint Paul says: William Wrede, Paul Those who want to find a way from the preaching of Jesus to early Christianity are conscious of the peculiar difficulties raised. Paul shows us with what complete indifference the earthly life of Jesus was regarded by primary Christianity. In the course of one or two generations this concept became the common property of the Christian faith, although it stood in contradiction to the tradition teaching represented by the Apostles at Jerusalem. What is the significance for our faith and for our religious life, of the fact that the Gospel of Paul is different from the Gospel of Jesus? The attitude which Paul himself takes up towards the Gospel of Jesus is that he does not repeat it in the words of Jesus, and does not appeal to its authority The fateful thing is that the Greek, the Catholic and the Protestant theologies all contain the Gospel of Paul in a form which does not continue the Gospel of Jesus, but displaces it. Mark Twain, Letters from the Earth ; Notebooks date? A great change from the divine view. If Christ were here now, there is one thing he would not be--a Christian. Paul has surely nothing to do with the Sermon on the Mount This is generally understood as a warning against untrustworthy leaders in religion Does the verse express the experience of the primitive Church? Might it not be a warning against Paul and his followers? Paul had not personally known Jesus, and hence he discovered him as Christ

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The important thing for him was that Christ became man and died and was resurrected, and not what he did in his life--not his ethical work as a teacher. There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus

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Chapter 4 : Paradox of the Cross: Life from Death

Get this from a library! The paradox of the cross in the thought of St. Paul. [Anthony Tyrrell Hanson].

Take our lives and let them be consecrated, Lord, to Thee; take our moments and our days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. A few days ago, a young boy named Emanuele asked a question of Pope Francis while the Pope was conducting a routine parish visit in Rome. Emanuele approached the same microphone that several other children had used to address Francis, who was sitting nearby on a platform, but once Emanuele arrived at the microphone he quickly became flustered. Clearly feeling for Emanuele, Francis graciously invited him onto the platform and encouraged Emanuele to whisper the question into his ear. He was a nonbeliever, but he had all four of his children baptized. He was a good man. Is dad in heaven? He had a good heart. God is the one who says who goes to heaven. And with a dad who was not a believer, but who baptized his children and gave them that bravura, do you think God would be able to leave him far from himself? Does God abandon his children? Does God abandon his children when they are good? And yet so much of the historic Christian tradition seems clear about the subject. No one comes to the Father except through me. Yet I do not think that Pope Francis was rejecting the instances in which Scripture attests to the uniquely saving power of Jesus. I fully expect to see people of all backgrounds and beliefs in heaven wherever it is and whenever I get to experience it. I am not sure, however, that respecting the beliefs or nonbelief of others requires me to downplay the importance of Jesus. The concept of paradox is at the heart of the Christian faith. Christianity would not be possible if two seemingly contradictory things could not be true simultaneously. Jesus, Christianity claims, was both human and divine; he existed at the beginning of everything and was born at a specific moment in time; he died and is still very much alive; he was rejected by all and yet the cornerstone of everything. Often a sheep has to die so that the human beings can profit from it. But the Good Shepherd is willing to sacrifice himself to lay down his life so that all of his sheep can thrive and keep on living. The Good Shepherd is both a shepherd and not a shepherd at all—a leader who cares for his sheep completely and a lamb who submits to slaughter for the sake of others. In the Good Shepherd, everything is flipped; the entire dynamic is inverted. But the phrase itself suggests that, in order to follow the example of the Good Shepherd, we must be willing to surrender something of our own existence, to loosen, if only a bit, our grip on what we hold to be true and dear. I recently had an encounter with a woman, an encounter that helped me think about how tightly I hold on to my own life, how unwilling I am to lay down my assumptions and preconceptions—the way I see the world. Before I met this woman, I had learned that she had been raised evangelical and was enthusiastically attending a notably evangelical church—things that I thought told me everything I needed to know about her. I was prepared to have a pleasant-enough, surface-level conversation with her, avoiding topics of any depth, and then go on my merry way, convinced that I was far more sensitive, intelligent, and tolerant than she was. But, much to my surprise, the conversation went deeper than surface level on its own, and veered at a certain point towards sexuality. I learned that the woman—and her congregation—had evolved on issues of sexuality over the past few years and that they were far more supportive of queer people and of marriage equality than I ever would have anticipated. Immediately, my opinion of the woman and her church improved; I started thinking very highly of this woman and liking everything she stood for. Up until that point, I had taken everything she said with a grain of salt; now, I thought she was brilliant and full of amazing ideas. But then I realized that neither the woman nor her congregation had transformed from evil into good overnight when they changed their minds about sexuality. They probably had been compassionate, thoughtful, faithful Christians all along, compassionate, thoughtful, faithful Christians who had simply disagreed with me and others like me about matters of human sexuality. It was a disagreement that was huge and problematic and may have been hurtful and resulted in disastrous consequences for many people, especially queer people in this particular congregation. It was a disagreement that I would have found highly concerning at the time. There was much more to this woman and her church

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than their opinions about human sexuality. This woman and her church were homophobic and they were ultimately good people. Both things had to have been true at the same time. You, Lord, are both Lamb and Shepherd. You, Lord, are both prince and slave. You, peacemaker and sword-bringer of the way you took and gave. You, the everlasting instant; you, whom we both scorn and crave. You, the everlasting instant; you, who are our pilgrim guide. Worthy is our earthly Jesus! Worthy is our cosmic Christ! Worthy your defeat and victory. Worthy still your peace and strife. You, the everlasting instant;

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The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St Paul. By Anthony Tyrell Hanson. Sheffield, JSOT Press, Pp. £8. - Volume 42 Issue 3 - John Barclay.

O Paradox of Paradoxes! Perhaps I am preaching to the choir when I say that the older I become, the more I come to see that our world is full of paradoxes. Contradictions of all sorts abound in our lives between individuals and their behavior, among ideologies and political systems, and so forth. I need not rattle off specific examples to prove my point. With age, we want to believe, comes wisdom and certainly the capability to engage critically about the world around us. Thus, a perceptive mind sees the ideological or ethical paradoxes that challenge or threaten. The wise, however, direct their lives to extract the benefit and the goodness out of every situation, not only for themselves but also for the people in their lives. The paradoxes, though, to which I refer appear on a wholly different plane. I am speaking about the paradox of God and His ways. In other words, God is a paradox to man because man has forgotten who God is, because he has lost faith in Him and in his own self. Perhaps God is a paradox to man because man has become a paradox to God. We often forget that according to the Christian Faith, man cannot be the point of reference in life; God is. So the paradoxical for man is really irrelevant; He is the norm, before whom we have fallen short. How odd really, to love someone who has hurt us, who has gossiped about us, who has sought out our demise. But the Lord seeks to bring every hateful heart back to its primordial state of innocence, fashioned in the divine image and likeness Genesis 1: As such, like the Father of the Prodigal Son in the parable of the same name Luke And in order to prove His love for us, in order to place our cause first, in order to set the example by which evil alone can be defeated, He offers the paradox of paradoxes God decides to die for His children according to human standards. It is not a permanent death, of course, but it is a submission to an extreme and unfair form of humiliation that God freely chose at the hands of those who rejected Him, to prove that the power of divine love is not only creative but redemptive. Love gives life, love decorates and ameliorates, and love corrects, even the worst of mistakes. This love, beyond any resemblance to an emotion, is incarnated in the Person of Jesus Christ and in His execution of the divine will. The example set of the innocent sheep led to the slaughter also speaks powerfully to each of us, to suffer quietly in love in order to bring our enemies around. For how can a hateful individual change his life if no one around him gives him the opportunity to be loved and so also to love in return? It is a gift of immeasurable value; it only needs to be opened. The Exapostelarian hymn of the feast highlights the paradoxical nature of the Precious Wood of Life: O Cross, you are what strengthened the Emperors. O Cross, the glory of Angels and the defeat of the demons. By the will of the God whose ways are not our ways, whose wisdom far surpasses ours, who is always one step ahead of us in His divine providence to save that which was lost. Our Lord is a God of manifold paradoxes and for our sakes there is nothing more beautiful than this truth! Liturgical Mystagogy in the Byzantine Prothesis Rite Boston, , and the author of an introductory chapter for a textbook on Christianity, as well as numerous papers and studies in theological journals.

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In an important extension to the main argument, Professor Hanson examines how the theme of the paradox of the cross fared at the hands of Paul's immediate successors up to the time of Ignatius of Antioch, and asks how far Paul's depiction of the apostolic ministry can throw light on questions of ministry today.

Paradox of the Cross: Today I would like to speak of the teaching that St. Paul bequeathed to us on the centrality of the Risen Christ in the mystery of salvation, on his Christology. In truth, the Risen Jesus Christ, "exalted above every other name", is at the centre of every reflection Paul makes. Christ, for the Apostle, is the criterion for evaluating events and things, the goal of every effort that he makes to proclaim the Gospel, the great passion that sustains his footsteps on the roads of the world. And this is a real and living Christ: This person who loves me, with whom I can speak, who listens to me and answers me, this is truly the starting point for understanding the world and finding the way through history. Those who have read St. Nevertheless we may think that in his catechesis he told far more about the pre-Paschal Jesus than he writes in his Letters which are admonitions in precise situations. His pastoral and theological intention was so focused on fostering the nascent communities that it came naturally to him to concentrate completely on the proclamation of Jesus Christ as "Lord", alive now and present now among his followers. Hence the characteristic essentiality of Pauline Christology, which develops the depths of the mystery with a constant and precise concern: For the Apostle the Resurrection is not an event in itself, separate from death: Even as the Risen One he bears his wounds: Paul had understood this identification of the Risen One with the Crucified Christ at the encounter on the road to Damascus: Paul is persecuting Christ in the Church and then realizes that the Cross is not "accursed by God" Dt 2: Fascinated, the Apostle contemplates the hidden secret of the Crucified and Risen One and, through the suffering experienced by Christ in his humanity earthly dimension, goes back to that eternal existence in which he is wholly one with the Father dimension before time: Passages such as the one from Psalm 90[89] should be interpreted in this sense: Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth" Prv 8: The praise of Wisdom, contained in the Book of the same name, is also evocative: The sapiential texts themselves which speak of the eternal pre-existence of Wisdom, also speak of the descent, the abasement of this Wisdom, who pitched a tent for herself among men. He created a tent for himself in the Old Testament: And we already see in the Books of the Old Testament that this lowering of Wisdom, her descent in the flesh, also suggests the possibility that she was rejected. Paul, in developing his Christology, refers precisely to this sapiential perspective: Similarly, Paul explains that Christ, like Wisdom, can be rejected above all by the rulers of this world cf. In the famous hymn contained in the Letter to the Philippians cf: This is one of the most elevated texts in the whole of the New Testament.. This is a very important fact because it means that Judaeo-Christianity, prior to St. Indeed, we can say that the Apostles themselves, at the important moments in the life of their Teacher, understood that he was the Son of God, as St. Peter said in Caesarea Philippi: However, let us return to the hymn in the Letter to the Philippians. His pre-existence is expressed by the words: What is striking is the contrast between the radical humbling of himself and his subsequent glorification in the glory of God. It is obvious that this second strophe is in contrast with the claim of Adam, who wanted to make a God of himself, and in contrast with the act of the builders of the tower of Babel, who wanted to construct a bridge to Heaven and make themselves divinities. However, this initiative of pride ended in self-destruction: The gesture of the Son of God is exactly the opposite: In addition to the Letter to the Philippians, there are other places in Pauline literature where the themes of the pre-existence and descent to the earth of the Son of God are connected to each other. A reaffirmation of the assimilation of Wisdom and Christ, with all the connected cosmic and anthropological implications, is found in the First Letter to Timothy: It is above all on these premises that a better definition of Christ as the sole Mediator is possible, against the background of the One God of the Old Testament cf. Christ is the true bridge that leads us to Heaven, to communion with God. And lastly, just a brief reference to the last developments of St. In the former, Christ is

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described as the "firstborn of all creation" 1: This word "first-born" suggests that the first of numerous children, the first of a great many brothers and sisters, came down to draw us and make us his brothers and sisters. In the Letter to the Ephesians we find a beautiful exposition of the divine plan of salvation, when Paul says that in Christ God desired to recapitulate everything cf. Christ is the epitome of all things, he takes everything upon himself and guides us to God. And thus he involves us in a movement of descent and ascent, inviting us to share in his humility, that is, in his love for neighbour, in order also to share in his glorification, becoming with him sons in the Son. Let us pray the Lord to help us conform to his humility, to his love, in order to be rendered participants in his divinization.

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Chapter 7 : St. Paul explains the meaning of suffering :: Catholic News Agency

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We know Your grace is sufficient for all of our needs. Help us rely upon You for all aspects of our lives from day to day. It certainly relieves the Creator of a tremendous responsibility. The ducks and the frog were the best of friends. They played together all day long. But, when the hot summer days came, the pond began to dry up. The ducks realized they would have to move. They could easily fly away to another place, but what about their friend, the frog? Finally, the ducks decided to put a stick between them. Each would hold one end with its bill, while the frog hung on to the stick by its mouth. So the three friends set out for another pond. As they were flying, the farmer saw them and said, "How clever! I wonder who thought of it? Indeed, pride goes before the fall. By giving him a thorn in the flesh, it counterbalanced the visions and revelations he had been having of heaven itself. Paul refers to himself as a man who was caught up to the third heaven. Indeed, Paul was talking about a vision of the heaven to come, where the triune God resides. Now, the nature of the inexpressible things Paul heard remains unknown to us because these are things Paul was not permitted to tell. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. For when I am weak, then I am strong. To be strong in Christ, one must be weak and not rely on the self. We just know it was bothersome enough that he pleaded with the Lord not once, but three times for its removal. When Peter was walking across the water toward Jesus, as the Lord had invited him to do, he was just fine until he began to look carefully at the wind and the waves. He then became scared and started to sink. In short, he was relying on himself for that "across the water" challenge. To whom or to what do you turn for the help, hope, and strength you require to get through life? Is that where you place your confidence today? The scene is a courtroom. The judge, robed in a black gown, has taken his seat. A prisoner, handcuffed, is led into the room. As he sees the judge, his heart quakes, and he is filled with fear. He has good reason to fear since the judge must pronounce sentence on him for his crime. Suddenly, a young boy enters the room, makes his way through the seats filled with spectators, runs up to the judge and whispers something into his ear. The judge reaches in his pocket and gives the lad a coin. The boy exits in a happy mood. The boy had no fear of the man robed in black, for the judge was his father. And so it is with you. In Christ, God is not your judge. In Christ, God is to you what the judge was to the little boy - Your father. You can approach Him fearlessly. He will provide for your needs! The psalmist wrote, "I lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, the maker of Heaven and earth" Psalm And yet, they did not fall. The truth is, God needs no props for his stars and planets. He hangs them on nothing. Do you trust in what you cannot see this blessed day? Do you rely on the Lord for every moment of your existence? And, do you believe the paradox-that the weak are the strong and the strong are the weak? Napoleon once insolently sneered, "I observe that God is usually on the side of the strongest battalions" but in , the glittering ranks of France and its tributary kings, numbering some , men, cross the Nieman to invade Russia. They captured Smolensk, won the bloody battle of Borondino, and approached Moscow. Then God sent on them the soft, feathery flakes of feeble, innocent, snow. The snows of God, the soft snows that a breath can melt, were too strong for the mightiest battalions. The French soldiers perished by the thousands and the Cossacks with their lances thrust out the frozen, famine stricken remnant the northern winter had not slain. God was not on the side of the strongest battalion that time. Alexander of Russia knew to whom he owed the victory, if Napoleon did not, and on his commemorative medal were these words, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the Glory. He had it backwards. For how could God give Himself to save the world? That, in itself is a paradox! Now, at the end, Jesus again pulled Himself up to the top of His Cross. Jesus

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willed Himself to die. The centurion bowed his head and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the Life. That means Jesus is living right now. He went on to say in that most blessed verse, "He who believes in Me, though he was dead, yet shall he live, and he who lives and believes in Me shall never die" John To be dead and yet live is a paradox. Are you living out that paradox today? Or, are you seeing things your way? The way of self-reliance? The ancient Greeks had a legend that Narcissus, the son of the river god, had fallen in love with himself after seeing his image in a pool of water. A seer had told his mother that her son must never see himself if he were to mature into manhood. For this reason, everything that threw off a reflection, such as metal, was removed. But one day he found a spring that formed a pool filled with crystal clear water. As Narcissus stooped to drink, he saw his reflection in the pool. He became despairingly in love with himself, and seeking to embrace himself, he fell into the water and drowned. The Bible says, "No one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it" Ephesians 5: Jesus tells us if we want to love someone very much, we must love him as much as we love ourselves. The scriptures do tell us to "love your neighbor as yourself. A New York telephone company analyzed telephone conversations and discovered the most frequently used word was "I. By nature, we are all this way. We put "I" at the center. What "we" do is determined by what "I" want. And that attitude, driven by our sin, carries over into the confidence arena as well. That means when it comes to getting through life, we also at times turn to ourselves. Truthfully, we have the paradox backwards! It is no wonder God at times does allow a thorn in the flesh or two to come in, to get our attention riveted back on Him! Back on the cross of Christ. He relied totally on the Lord and he survived. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace, but an angel came and saved them. Martin Luther was known to have numerous physical ailments, but these only served to drive him closer to the Savior. One troubled soul asked a friend, "What shall I do in all my troubles? The troubled soul was asked, "Why is this cow looking over the fence? Look over them and up to God, because we can never look through them. He did it all so that you can see things His way. The Lord Himself has provided for you the means to get His view of life. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1: It is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, to the Jew first, and also for the Greek. You see things His way, the way of the cross, and not the way of glory for yourself.

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Chapter 8 : The Lutheran Hour :: Lutheran Hour Ministries

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This zealous Jewish persecutor of Christians would change his name to Paul and almost immediately become the greatest evangelizer of a faith he had previously sought vigorously to wipe out. But what we often forget as we study St. Paul is that, in addition to being the prototypical evangelizer, is also one of the finest, in addition to being one of the first, theologians of the Christian faith. As we celebrated the Feast of St. Paul last week, I want to focus on this often overlooked aspect of St. To put his contribution to theology in context, we have to remember that when St. Paul wrote his letters--now contained in the New Testament--the Gospels had not been written. In the New Testament we read today, the Gospels come first. This belies the fact that, chronologically, St. In addition to this, St. Paul was in a very unique position for his time, adding to his resume as a theologian. He was schooled in the Jewish tradition, but yet evangelized primarily to the Gentiles. Paul understood both the Jewish roots of Jesus Christ and the first Christians, and the lives of non-Jewish converts to Christianity. The ability to belong to both worlds provided him with the context in which to write his theological letters to his audience in a way that very few, if any, other figures of the early Church could. So I hereby give you St. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ. Original sin leads humanity to be slanted or inclined towards evil, towards death. We see time and time again throughout the Old Testament the nation of Israel falling away from God due to sin and the death and chaos that result from this. The second half of the verse provides us with the escape from this deadly cycle of falling away from God and death: Jesus Christ who is a gift freely given from God the Father who had one ultimate mission here on earth. His mission was, in its simplest form, to be the sacrificial lamb that would once for all win the salvation of humanity. But often our thinking on this verse ends here. John Chrysostom highlights another key aspect, that we need to continue to re-read the first part of the verse as a deterrent from sinning again. For although Christ has won our salvation once for all, by our sin, by our choosing evil over that free gift of God we can fall again into death. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. Paul and so I include it here. The Letter to the Hebrews deals with the notion of priestly sacrifice and is excellent reading for anybody interested in the Jewish roots of the Catholic priesthood and provides excellent material on how a priest is very different than a Church paid social worker. But aside from this, the letter also highlights a key theme of St. Paul that is central to this verse, namely that need to hold fast to the faith. Paul, in his dealings with various Christian communities, was very aware that the zeal of faith can, and often does, fade with time. This is natural, but what we need to continue to do once the euphoric high of our faith fades away is to hold fast to the confession of faith as an act of the will. I may not feel that same high as I did the first time I received the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, but I need to hold fast to the confession of our faith. In our age and time this can be hard to do. Paul reminds us here of our Christian duty- to hold fast to our confession! The prayer of the Church that is prayed every day by deacons, priests, religious men and women and the entirety of the Church includes every psalm and once a week this hymn. The Church has deemed this hymn important enough that it should be read and prayed at least once a week. One of the most difficult sins to purge from our lives is pride. We think so highly of ourselves and our accomplishments that often we need to be reminded of the call to humility. This hymn speaks so beautifully of the humility of Jesus Christ that we cannot help but grow in our own humility by praying it at least every week as the Church sets up for priests and religious men and women. Through this hymn we learn where true exultation comes from: In order to be great, we must become small. In order to live in heaven, we must die to ourselves. This hymn speaks to this in addition to much, much more. Entire books can be written on this simply hymn trying to unpack the theological riches of it, but I will leave it to you to grow in your appreciation of this hymn by slowly reading and re-reading it in your own prayer life. Our duty

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to conform our lives to the grace that comes through the free gift of Jesus Christ on the cross is a defining aspect of St.

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