

JJ<sup>1</sup>

If you had to make a list of all the things that are necessary in your life, you'd probably start with things like food, water, oxygen. Because you're a human being, these things are necessary. Companionship in one form or another is necessary too. In fact, for an infant to live in an orphanage can be fatal, but not for a reason you'd expect. "Babies who are not held and nuzzled and hugged enough will literally stop growing and-if the situation lasts long enough, even if they are receiving proper nutrition-die."

Things that are necessary for us are real needs that God has created us with. You might also add to your list things like: family, money, house, car, etc. All those things are nice, but they aren't truly necessary. You might think you need them, but you don't actually need them to be a living, breathing human being.

But what about Jesus? He was a living, breathing human being. Well, he still is, but now he's glorified. But on top of that, he's also true God. What is necessary for God? What does God actually need? Well, really, he needs nothing. He's above need. He is the One who created all things. Everything is his. Yet, there are still things that are necessary for God. You just have to understand that whatever God says is necessary for him

is something he freely chooses for himself.

And what does Jesus say is necessary for him? He says, "the Son of Man must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the experts in the law; be killed; and after three days rise again."

To say he must suffer many things is a shocking understatement. He's going to be rejected by those who should have been the first to recognize him. Those who hated one another are united in their hatred for Jesus and their certainty that he must die. And they're going to kill him by handing him over to the Roman government to do the dirty work, the government they hated as much as they hated each other. But here, more than any other time in history, we see the enemy of my enemy is my friend. But it's all going to end in an amazing resurrection from the dead!

It's all a fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. It's all exactly the way it has to be because God said it is necessary. You'd expect to hear Peter and the other disciples leaping for joy, knowing what Jesus was going to do, but no, not at all. "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

Peter thought it was necessary to take Jesus aside and rebuke Jesus for speaking about these things. Not only did Peter not want to think about his dear friend and Savior Jesus suffering those things. Peter wanted a different Messiah than what Jesus said he was. Peter wanted a Messiah whose kingdom would be an earthly kingdom. Peter wanted a Messiah who would get rid of the Romans and establish the nation of Israel once again as a political and economic powerhouse in the world. Peter wanted life to get better, not worse, both for himself and for Jesus.

But after turning around and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter had in mind the things of men, not the things of God. Peter was unknowingly speaking for Satan and his wicked plan. Peter was getting in the way of Jesus' journey to the cross. That's why it was necessary for Jesus to rebuke Peter publicly, not only because the others certainly had the same false thoughts in their hearts and minds, but also because Peter's sin was so dangerous. Jesus needed to be this blunt about this false teachings so that they would see the true source of this thinking

—it comes straight from the depths of hell.

But the lesson isn't over yet. It's just half done. After addressing the necessity of Jesus to carry his own cross, he tells us of the necessity of carrying our own. "[Jesus] called the crowd and his disciples together and said to them, "If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will

lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. After all, what good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? In fact, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."



Think again about your list of those things you consider necessary in your life: family, money, house, car, cell phone, 7 hours of sleep, sports, entertainment... But do you notice what's missing from that list? Do you notice what's missing that Jesus says is necessary for you too? Suffering, death, constant use of the Word and Sacraments, God...

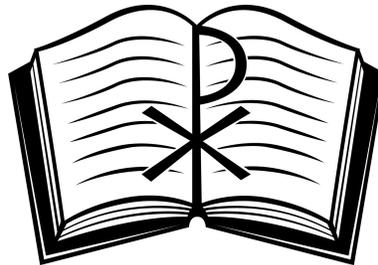
You see, friends, the life of the Christian is a life under the cross. It was necessary for Jesus. He says it is necessary for you too. The cross is not just every bad thing that happens to you. Bad things happen to unbelievers too. In it's essence, the cross is the suffering and struggle you endure through the denial of self. It is the turning away from all that is *just for me* and my imagined good, and turning to all that is for Christ and those God has given to me to serve.

This world teaches us to be rich to ourselves and not rich toward God. But we must consider Jesus' question, "...what good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?" If you invest your life in the things of this world then this world has your heart and not the Lord. And there is no way to buy back your soul once it is lost. As Jesus says, "What can a person give in exchange for their soul?" The answer is "Nothing!" Again, part of the necessity of the cross is the denial of self.

Jesus calls on you to believe and promote all of his Word and not be ashamed of it. But teachings like fellowship, roles of men & women, sexuality etc., are unpopular in our world today. You can try to convince yourself that it doesn't matter all that much, but Jesus tells you it is necessary. To shirk the cross to avoid persecution or even just to be more

popular in the world is to be ashamed that you're a Christian, and therefore ashamed of Jesus himself.

And when this happens, you deserve to have Jesus come, stare you in the eyes and say, "I'm ashamed you of! Get behind me, Satan! You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men." And Jesus does do this, though not in these exact words. He does it through the law. He shows you how a part of you still agrees with and wants what Satan wants.



Friends, our lives here on earth are lives under the cross. How good that they are! God sends us crosses so that we would not be attached to this world, but that we would long for the next. But first and foremost, how good it is that we live our lives on

earth under the cross of Christ! And that is what every cross we bear in this life points us to—drives us to!

Christ who suffered and endured every cross, for you. Christ who willingly endured persecution head on, for you. Christ who never once turned away in shame because of mockery, for you. Christ who never kept his mouth shut, fearing that the truth would get him in trouble, for you. Christ who suffered the pain of physical torture at the hands of his enemies, for you. Christ who literally carried a cross to Calvary, for you, all so

that he could be nailed there, for you. Christ who there on the cross carried the eternal burden of your sin in his holy soul, not even being spared by his heavenly Father the eternal torment you deserve, for you! Christ always and perfectly denied himself and his own best interests, and friends, he did it all for you! He did it because it was necessary—it was the only way he could save you. It was necessary for him to do this so that you would see it is necessary now for you too to pick up your cross and follow him all the way to where he has gone—the cross-free glories of heaven. Amen.

SDG<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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