

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

October 2016

I've come across a number of lawsuits filed by people who didn't end up getting what they wanted out of life - and reacted by suing. And they don't just take place in America, by the way.

One of the more disheartening cases I came across recently involved a Chinese couple. The man was a successful and wealthy businessman and he married a beautiful young woman. Unbeknownst to him, she had spent more than \$100,000 on cosmetic surgery. I saw the before and after pictures and all I can say is the results were remarkable. She didn't even look like the same woman.

They eventually had a baby girl - and as the little girl grew she obviously looked nothing like her father and very obviously nothing like her mother. He complained that his daughter was extremely unattractive. In fact, he began to question his wife's faithfulness to him....this was obviously someone else's child!!

She finally confessed that their daughter actually looked exactly like she did - before she had all the changes made to her face.

Instead of accepting her apologies for keeping that secret and even more tragically, instead of accepting his daughter, he was offended, that his daughter was so unattractive - he didn't want her - she didn't fit with the image he wanted to have as a professional and successful businessman.

He divorced his wife and then sued her for \$100,000 and won!

So much of what occupies these lawsuits are nothing more than personal rights, personal image and personal vindication.

Pull back the mask and it's really all about I, me and mine.

"The kingdom of me". There is potential in every human heart to stand up for their own rights...their own reputation...their own vindication...their own image...their own lives that really and freely revolve around the "kingdom of me".

One of the ways our Lord enabled the early Christians - and us today - to crush the kingdom of me, mentality - was to inspire an early church hymn.

We began expounding on the lyrics a couple months ago in our study here in Philippians.

We've been in chapter 2 of Philippians regarding humility. Notice verse 6. *He existed in the form of God*. That's a statement of truth. And the verb - to exist - refers to timeless pre-existence. Jesus preexisted in the nature and essence of deity as God the Son.

- He gave up the right to live like God – He set His glory aside and descended to earth.

Then Paul writes in the next statement, that Jesus has equality with God the Father. But He didn't clutch it - He emptied His hands of it.

- And so we said that Jesus Christ, secondly, gave up the right to act like God. In other words, He never used the power and attributes that He clearly had the right to use, for His own comfort - His own benefit - His own vindication.

Paul adds that Jesus didn't just surrender equal rights with the Father, He actually - verse 7 - emptied Himself, taking on the form - the nature - of a bond-servant.

The one who was Supreme from eternity past, now comes to earth and becomes a penniless servant.

He will borrow everything and own virtually nothing. He empties His hands of divine splendor and divine prerogative and divine rights and becomes our Servant Shepherd Savior.

He is the only person to walk the face of the earth with the right to have anything He desired and to do anything He wanted - He literally gave up those rights for our eternal benefit and salvation.

Now what Paul is going to do next is add to these two statements on Christ's deity by giving us two statements on Christ's humanity. And I'm going to wrap these two statements under the heading of one more right that Jesus gave up.

3: Jesus gave up the right to look like God.

Verse 7b - the last time - *being made in the likeness of men*. You could render this generically to refer to Jesus literally joining mankind - in other words, He became a member of the human race.

The word Paul uses for likeness, *homoioima*, refers to that which is to be made like something else, not just in appearance but in reality. Jesus wasn't a clone or some disguised alien. He wasn't a god wearing a slip-on covering of flesh to fool everybody.

He had the same flesh and blood that we have; He would experience the same limitations that we do; He would be subject to the same ups and downs of life that we have - He would be subject to all the emotions and all of the temptations that we are.

What's interesting is that this word for likeness informs us - and Paul is careful to inform us - that Jesus Christ is truly similar to us, yet different from us in uniqueness - while the Lord's likeness to man was real, it did not express His entire self. In other words, there is more than meets the eye.

As we've already discussed, He was without a sin nature and He had a divine nature as well. He was tempted like us, but sinless. He was fully a member of the human race, but still a member of the triune God.

And so, depending on the text you're studying, Jesus will sound like an ordinary human being and at other times make the audacious claim that He was God and/or equal to the God the Father.

In fact, on one occasion, when the Jews fully understood that's what He was claiming to be, they picked up stones to hurl them at Him and Jesus asked them, "*I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?*" *The Jews answered him, "for a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God!"* (John 10:31-33).

Listen, they really couldn't understand it anymore than His own disciples could - although the disciples believed Him.

That He was both God and man - God/man.

Here Jesus is obviously exhausted as He sleeps through a hurricane while the boat carrying Him and His disciples stalls on the Sea of Galilee in this terrifying storm; they are certain they will die and Jesus is so tired He's just sleeping through it all; they finally wake Him up and He stands up and commands the wind and the waves to be still. (Mark 4:35)

And the disciples whispered to each other, "*who is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?*" (Mark 4:41).

You know what the problem is? Jesus is given up the right to look like God. I mean, Jesus just looks like an ordinary member of the human race. And what's an ordinary member of the human race doing, commanding the wind and the waves?!

Part of the problem is that Jesus was made in the likeness of men.

Paul drives the humanity of Christ home even further with his second descriptive - notice verse 8 - *being found in appearance of a man*. *Being found* simply means being recognized or observed - as an authentic man.

In other words, when people met Him, He wasn't like Spock with pointy ears and obviously no personality so that everybody immediately knew He was from another planet! No, when people met and talked to Jesus, they observed - they found Him to be a normal being.

Being found in the appearance of a man means that now anybody can go and find out that Jesus is a real human being.

In appearance...mind you, Paul uses a different word here translated appearance. It's the word *schema* and it literally reinforces the fact that the outward appearance of God the Son was absolutely human.

This is the amazing reality of God the Son - God the glorious preexistent, Creator, second person of the eternal Godhead becoming Jesus, a Jewish boy who grows up to be a normal-looking Jewish man.

That can't be, can it?

The mid-evil Catholic and Orthodox church couldn't stand the thought of Mary being a normal, human being; so even Jesus being subjected to the rigors of normality; and so the Apocryphal writings and legends were raised to clean up the story and make Jesus anything but normal.

For instance, soon after His birth, one legend grew, as Joseph and Mary and the baby traveled towards Egypt, they sought refuge in a cave where it was so cold the ground was covered with frost. But, there was a spider at the entrance of the cave that recognized this special holy baby and so it spun a web so thick across the cave entrance that it hung like a curtain and the cave became warm and cozy. We just can't have this family out in the cold, now can we.

As they traveled, another church tradition says that Jesus commanded the trees to bend over so Joseph could pluck the fruit; later, Jesus ordered a spring of water to gush out from the roots of a tree to quench their thirst, Mary was even helped to sleep one night by angels coming and playing music for her on violins.

Church traditions taught that where ever they traveled, all the animals would bow and all the idols would crumble to dust.

Later the boys in the neighborhood would spread their cloaks for Jesus to sit on and crown Him with wreaths and flowers.

Everybody in Nazareth just knew He was special.

When Jesus eventually began His ministry - He preached in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and when He finished, the people all said with amazement, "*who is He... isn't He the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. And His sisters, are they not all with us?*" (Matthew 13:55-56)

In other words, they knew His entire family all their lives - they knew the names of Jesus' half-brothers and half-sisters - the whole family.

When Jesus finished His sermon in His hometown, nobody in the synagogue stood up after Jesus preached and said, "I knew it! I knew Jesus was different... I just knew there was something to all those miracles He did from His childhood on up... I knew there was something different about His halo!" "I just knew it!"

No, the text says, in the following verse, *and they took offense to Him!* (Matthew 13:57)

This all goes without even mentioning in the harmonious Gospels that Jesus's first miracle was turning the water to wine (John 2:11).

"Who Do You Think You Are?!"

Jesus had given up the right to look like God:

- Being made in the likeness of man - that means He joined the human race
- Being found in appearance as a man - that means He chose a human face

Before His incarnation, Christ was clothed with the glory of divine splendor that we can't even begin to imagine - invisible to the human eye as it is God the Father and God the Spirit.

But now. God the Son has taken on flesh and blood and the result is - He looks like any human male of Jewish descent. Now, that doesn't sound all that bad, does it?

What's so humbling about being found in the appearance as a man? We look pretty good! Especially you!

We don't really see anything all that humbling about choosing to join the human race and take on a human face - because we know almost nothing about His pre-existent glory:

For the glorious God the Son to give up the right to live like God and act like God and look like God; in order to live and die so that those who listen to His message - and benefited from His incarnation; His gospel of salvation by faith in Him alone, so that they would be rescued. That would be humiliation that would be like you or me becoming a flea to rescue a bunch of other fleas from an impending exterminator!

If you were God the Son and you knew you were going to become a man - and because you were God you could actually choose the way you would look, what kind of man would you look like?

Ladies, you could choose your face and figure and physique.

Guys, you could choose your waist size, size of your biceps, eye color, the color of your hair - or you could actually have hair!

If we can choose what we look like - every woman would stop traffic, the guys would try to look like Brad Pitt or Danzel Washington or Tom Cruise or Idris Elba or someone like that, or a combination all rolled into one. C'mmon, you know you would!

So what did the Son of God choose to be found in the appearance of as man?

Well the only detailed, physical description of Jesus Christ is found in Isaiah 53:2-3; He wrote about the coming Messiah and actually described Him: "*He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, no appearance that we should be attracted to Him.*"

He was an average, run-of-the-mill Jewish man who was not in the least good-looking.... Imagine!

That was the face and physique that God the Son chose.

He truly gave up the right to look like God.

Is it any wonder that people assume that Jesus was anything but God, in the flesh... The King of Kings, robed in ordinary Jewish skin?

Jesus Christ voluntarily gave up:

- The right to live like God
- The right to act like God
- The right to look like God

Let's keep this exposition in context.... This hymn of the early church is not just a reminder of Christ's great sacrifice; it is a command to imitate the humility of Christ.

It begins in verse 5 - *have this attitude in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*. So... Don't be tempted to say, "He's just so wonderful and I'm glad Jesus did that, because I sure can't."

Don't be satisfied to think, "The Lord can do that, but surely He understands that I can't."

I've got to stand up for my rights..... I've got to be vindicated..... I can't be passed over or become a pushover. If someone does me wrong, they're going to be sorry.

I'm going to defend the kingdom of me. Surrender your desire to vindicate or defend yourself.

An old university professor told me once of a tragic events surrounding the loss of his son, Antonio who was 34 years old at the time, working late at night in his restaurant when an attempted burglary went haywire and the burglar shot him and killed him.

Recently, I read an update of that story in a Christianity today magazine and recognized Dr. Smith's picture. The article brought me up to date on something he had told me.

He writes, "during the trial I saw the back of Tony's murderer, then 18 years old. I saw his mother and some family members weeping as a judge sentenced him to many years in prison. Following our son's murder, which did not seem to have any redemptive value. The question God's Spirit was asking my heart was, "Do you really believe the gospel that you preach?"

"I knew how to explain, illustrate, and apply forgiveness from a biblical perspective; now God was challenging me... That I must, by His grace, live that forgiveness now."

Dr. Smith goes on to write, "30 years prior to Tony's murder, I also had been working at a store on a Saturday night around 1130 and was robbed at gunpoint; God spared me. I struggled with how God could spare me but not spare Tony.

God has been preparing me to mirror the forgiveness modeled by Jesus Christ who died for the ungodly.

I have forgiven Tony's murderer. I confess that the ache of memory is still there, but the paralyzing sting has been swallowed up by God's agape love.

I finally mailed a letter to this young man, asking that he add my name to his visitors list so that I could visit him and deliver to him the gospel of Christ. Just a few months ago, he added me to his list.

Soon by God's grace, I will see the young man whose face was the last face our son saw before he was standing in the presence of the Lord."

Wow!!....that is the attitude of Jesus Christ, who laid aside his rights and surrendered what he deserved out of sheer love and grace.

Jesus Christ gave up His right to live like God and act like God and look like God.

His humility, Paul writes, will end with His death. He will ultimately give up the right to be treated like God!

For the believer and the church, this attitude of self-denial and self-sacrifice is not optional, it is essential.

That's what you call "crushing the kingdom of me."

Surrendering to the kingdom and the character of Christ.

And as we demonstrate to one another and our world, the laying down of our rights....the gospel is validated...and Christ is ultimately exalted.

Keep on crushing.....

Chief

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Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felo