

## **Part I — Introduction and Definitions**

The central purpose of this thesis is to establish that the set of attitudes and actions of Jesus during His suffering and death express most clearly the foundational paradigm to which God has purposed every Christian disciple to be conformed. Table I, “Likeness to Jesus = Cruciformity”, (pages 7-9) gives ample Scriptural evidence that our focusing on and being conformed to these attitudes and actions is of paramount importance in following Jesus, in becoming like Him.

### **A. The Cross as a Metaphor**

“The Cross” is often used metaphorically to refer to this “set of attitudes and actions” both in their expression in and through Jesus and also in the definition and description of the New Life that a Christian disciple is called to pursue:

[T]he Lord Jesus spoke of the cross . . . as a symbol of the necessity of full commitment (even unto death) for those who could be His disciples . . . The cross then is a symbol of Jesus’ love . . . and the thankful believer’s unreserved commitment to Christian discipleship.<sup>1</sup>

[C]rucifixion is metaphorically used of the renunciation of the world, that characterizes the true Christian life.<sup>2</sup>

It [the Cross] denotes the whole passion of Christ . . . . [and] [t]hat portion of affliction which is endured by pious and good men as a trial of their faith and to conform them to the example of their crucified Master.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Lockyer, ed., *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Carmel, NY: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1986), 266.

<sup>2</sup>W. E. Vine, M. F. Unger, Wm. White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, 1985), 138.

<sup>3</sup>Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, Inc., 1994), 1309.

The metaphorical meaning of the Cross that is central to the theme of this thesis is covered comprehensively by the terms “cruciform(ity)” and “the paradigm of the Cross”. Vital to the understanding of this thesis, these terms are explained below in sections “B.” and “C.” and are used extensively throughout the whole thesis.

### **B. Cruciform / Cruciformity**

In the last few years, a growing number of Christian leaders have begun using the terms “cruciform” and “cruciformity” in respect to Jesus’ nature and to our likeness to Him. For a much longer time, “cruciform” has been used in many other different contexts for items shaped like a Cross: floor plan of a church, tail of an airplane, position of wings of invertebrates, crystals, gravitational pull of particles, arrangement of leaf blades and petals of a flower, chassis of a truck, ligaments in the human body, etc., etc.

Although the concept of cruciformity may be foreign to many, it was central to the Apostle Paul’s theology and ethics. This centrality was influenced by two main factors: (1) the revelation from the risen Christ to Paul regarding the centrality of the Cross,<sup>4</sup> and (2) the common use of crucifixion by the Romans for criminals, including Christians.<sup>5</sup> For readers to appreciate and to understand well the concept of cruciformity, it will be necessary to seek a revelation from God, such as Paul had, and to imagine often the horrors of the Cross during the reading of each of the studies in Part II.

---

<sup>4</sup>Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Pub. Co., 2001), 20.

<sup>5</sup>Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 5.

---

Table I on pages 7 to 9, “Likeness to Jesus = Cruciformity”, gives evidence that this term is completely appropriate in giving the “shape” of Jesus’ manifestation of the nature of God and also in defining the ways in which Jesus is an Example for every aspect of Christian discipleship. Note the following comments of theologians regarding the meaning and significance of cruciformity in leadership:

Throughout the New Testament, leadership is cruciform—literally, “cross-shaped.” As disciples, we follow a leader whose own path of obedience to God led him to the cross, a leader whose identity is revealed unmistakably by his wounds, a leader whose Gospel is simply “the word of the cross”.<sup>6</sup>

The cross is the paradigm for a disciple’s life in the world. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Taking up the cross means intentionally conforming our lives to the pattern of life shown in Jesus’ death on the cross—a pattern that Michael Gorman has labeled “cruciformity.” It is living by the “law of Christ,” which means having a “ministry shaped by Christ’s paradigmatic status-denying, other-regarding love.”<sup>7</sup>

Leaders are first and foremost disciples, people whose identity is found in the crucified Jesus—not in their leading, not in their ministries, not in their positions or titles or credentials, and not in their own strength. . . . The cross is the supreme revelation of God’s power-in-weakness, and the resulting paradox is that God’s power is “made perfect in our weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9) just as God’s power was made perfect in the self-emptying weakness of Jesus at the cross . . .

Christian leaders are people who live the Cross—humbling themselves; voluntarily divesting themselves of their rights and privileges; trusting not in their own wisdom; insisting not on their own way; doing nothing out of selfish ambition; seeking not their own advantage but the benefit of others; in humility, considering others better than themselves; giving up their lives for the sake of the lost, the vulnerable, and the neglected.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Jeffrey P. Greenman, “The Shape of Christian Leadership”, <http://www.tyndale.ca/leadership/files/2>.

<sup>7</sup>Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 186. As quoted by J. Greenman in “The Shape of Christian Leadership”

<sup>8</sup>Jeffrey P. Greenman, “The Shape of Christian Leadership”, 2, 3.

---

### **C. The Paradigm of the Cross**

The term “paradigm”, used in respect to cruciformity by Michael J. Gorman on the previous page, carries with it rich implications that challenge us to examine how we view Jesus as our Example; and, consequently, the understanding of this concept will help us work through what it means to truly follow Christ as His disciples.

The basic thesis that I shall seek to advance here is that, when considered collectively, the various paradigmatic functions of Jesus’ death are referred to impressively widely in the New Testament. In fact, I contend that the New Testament treatments of Jesus’ death as paradigmatic offer powerful resources for Christian self-understanding and ethical effort. The New Testament references to Jesus’ death as paradigmatic make heavy intellectual and behavioural demands, but are ignored at great risk to the theological integrity and the efficacy of the endeavour of Christians.<sup>9</sup>

In His death Jesus taught us how to live. We often look at His dying moments and observe that His death illustrates the seriousness of sin and the need for a Savior to pay the price for our iniquity. We recognize that by His substitutionary death, He died in our place. But Peter said that there’s even more to the cross than that. Christ died not only for us, but also as an example to us. He died to show us how to live.<sup>10</sup>

In his well-known book *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “When Christ calls a man, He bids Him come and die.” With that, the German theologian, preacher and martyr (he was executed by the Nazis in 1945) has succinctly and profoundly identified the very heart and core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Master Himself put it this way, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,” (Luke 9:23) . . . Jesus was saying, “Just as I must die, so must you.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>L.W.Hurtado, “Jesus’ Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 57 (2004), 413-433.

<sup>10</sup>John MacArthur, “Christ Humbled, Christ Exalted: Jesus’ Death Shows Us How to Live”, [www.BibleBB.com](http://www.BibleBB.com).

<sup>11</sup>Dennis Conner, “Death and Christian Discipleship”, [www.yadkinvillechurchofchrist.org/articles2.html](http://www.yadkinvillechurchofchrist.org/articles2.html).

---

The following “Leadership Letter” shows how important it is to examine what paradigms we follow and to make sure we follow a Biblical one; i.e., the paradigm of the Cross.

---

### **Paradigm Shifts<sup>12</sup>**

Our last several letters presented significant paradigm changes regarding leader development that are necessary to deal with the crises of quantity and quality of church leaders around the world.

It is clear that these all require significant changes of thinking – or, “paradigm shifts.”

In his famous book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn defines a “paradigm” as “a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions and practices shared by a community which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way a community organizes itself.”

Thus, a paradigm is an overarching mindset, a worldview, a particular perception of the way things are. Moreover, a paradigm is shared by the members of a broad community. The fact that it is a shared belief system makes paradigms at once powerful and yet difficult to discern. Frequently, paradigms are implicit and hidden assumptions. What gives paradigms their subtle power is that we generally don’t distinguish between *what’s* being thought and the paradigm it’s being thought *through*. In demonstrating this point, Kuhn traces scientific disciplines in their shifting of gears over the past 400 years, and he points out three surprising patterns:

A dominant paradigm is seldom, if ever, stated explicitly; it exists unquestioned. Once paradigms are accepted, our minds cling to them tenaciously. The unfolding of a new paradigm is always discontinuous. Intellectual and emotional resistance inevitably arise when a new way of looking at the world is presented.

Joel Barker, in *The Business of Paradigms*, makes the following points about paradigms:

---

<sup>12</sup>Malcom Webber, “Building Healthy Leaders: Addressing the Current Leader Development Crisis #5”, Leadership Letter #103 — November 2, 2007, <http://www.leadershipletters.com/letters/letter102.php>.

- 
- Paradigms are common. We have them in almost every aspect of our lives, including our spiritual lives. We have paradigms of how we understand “church,” “Christian leadership” and, of course, “leader development.”
  - Paradigms are useful. They help us identify what is important and what is not. They focus our attention. They offer us models for problem solving and ways of acting and reacting.

Paradigms themselves are not bad. In fact, we need them. The problem occurs when our current paradigms prevent us from seeing new and better ways of doing things.

- Sometimes our paradigm can become *the* paradigm – the only way to do something. This can lead to “paradigm paralysis.”

Consequently, when we’re confronted with an alternative idea, we reject it out of hand.

Paradigms can be so strong they act as psychological filters – we quite literally see the world through our paradigms. Any data that exists in the real world (or even in the Bible) that does not fit our paradigm will have a difficult time getting through our filters. We are quite literally unable to perceive the facts right before our eyes.

Thus, our greatest strengths can become our greatest weakness by not allowing us to see both the need and the opportunity for change.

- The people who create new paradigms are usually outsiders. They are not part of the established paradigm community.

They have nothing to lose by creating the new paradigm. This means, if we want to find the new paradigms that are developing in a certain field, we usually must look beyond the center, sometimes even beyond the fringes!

- Those practitioners of the old paradigm who choose to change to the new paradigm have to be very courageous.

New paradigms threaten the old ones. The higher our position, the greater the risk. The better we are at the old ways, the more we have invested in it, the more we have to lose by changing paradigms.

- We *can* choose to change our paradigms. We can choose to question our old paradigms and adopt new ones.

May the Lord Jesus give us the insight and honesty to challenge our traditional paradigms of leader development and the courage to return to biblical truths!

---

---

Table I shows how significant in the New Testament are the cruciform aspects of the nature of Jesus as a paradigm for us to follow.

**TABLE I — LIKENESS TO JESUS = CRUCIFORMITY**

Mat. 16:24, 25: Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (See also Mark 8:35, 10:21; Luke 9:23, 24, 14:27)

Mark 10:39: . . . Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, (See also Mat. 20:23)

John 12:23-25: Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 15:12, 13: My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Acts 5:41: The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Acts 21:13: Then Paul answered, . . . I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name [cruciform nature] of the Lord Jesus.”

Rom. 8:29, 36: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers . . . As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

Rom. 12:1, 2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . .

Rom. 15:1-3: We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”

---

1 Cor. 4:12-16: . . . When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. . . . Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

2 Cor. 2:15, 16: For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. . . .

2 Cor. 4:10-12: We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

Gal. 6:14: May I never boast except in the cross our of Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Gal. 6:17: Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Eph. 5:2: and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Eph. 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Phil. 1:29: For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

Phil. 2:5-8: Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Phil. 3:10: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Col. 1:24: Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

2 Tim. 1:8: So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God[.]

---

Heb. 12:1-4: . . . let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Heb. 13:12, 13: And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

1 Pet. 2:20-23: . . . But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Pet. 3:17, 18: It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

1 Pet. 4:1 . . . since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

1 Pet. 4:12, 13: Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 John 3:16: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 4:10: This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Rev. 12:11: They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.