

Friday, June 10, 2016 - Never the Greatest

Last week, the death of Cassius Clay (better known as Muhammad Ali) brought with it the renewed moniker, "The Greatest", to describe Clay's life both in and out of the ring. The description couldn't be more inaccurate.

Conventional wisdom says that Clay's charisma, outspokenness and talent made him "the greatest" boxer to ever step into the ring. Clay made his professional debut on October 29, 1960, winning a six-round decision over Tunney Hunsaker. From then until the end of 1963, Clay amassed a record of 19–0 with 15 wins by knockout. His in ring domination continued until March 1966, when Clay refused to be inducted into the armed forces. He was systematically denied a boxing license in every state and stripped of his passport.

Growing up as a young man in the 70's, I remember his return to the ring and the many fights he had against some of the greatest boxing names of that decade. He won some, he lost some. Some he won he actually lost (Ken Norton and Jimmy Young, 1976). He was not the same fighter he was in the 60's. What was always consistent was his complete arrogance, total disrespect and relentless taunting of his opponents. As with today's athletes, he was far from a role model.

His personal life consisted of 4 marriages which were filled with numerous affairs and his "conversion to Islam in 1964. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, he stated that "Islam is a religion of peace" and "does not promote terrorism or killing people", and that he was "angry that the world sees a certain group of Islam followers who caused this destruction, but they are not real Muslims. They are racist fanatics who call themselves Muslims". In December 2015, he stated that "True Muslims know that the ruthless violence of so-called Islamic jihadists goes against the very tenets of our religion." He obviously never read the Qu'ran. His personal life never resembled anything you would associate with being "the greatest."

Fortunately, all of mankind has the opportunity to know The Greatest Man to ever live. Diety, which left the confines of heaven; He HUMBLLED Himself to become a human and to subject Himself to the Father like other humans are to do. He was willing to give up His state of glory, where He was visible as God, and leave it to form another appearance. He did not lose the very nature He had, but his immediate presence on earth took on another visible form to a different group of observers. He became a man. He had two natures; he was divine and human. He was fully God and fully man.

He took on the form of a servant. He subjected himself to the Father. Isaiah prophesied concerning the suffering servant (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-9; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). He remained a servant to the very end (Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 13:12-15). He humbled Himself to the point of dying as a man -- in a special way. The noun form of "humbled" is translated "low estate" in Luke 1:48. It is used in connection with the Lord's "humiliation" in Acts 8:33, as Philip quoted from Isa. 53. He was obedient to the point of death at the hands of His enemies, who chose the most cruel form of death -- that of the cross. The death on the cross was a

slow painful death. It was a shameful death reserved for the worst of criminals during the Roman Empire.

My friends, if you don't know Him or don't have a relationship with Him, let me introduce to you Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Greatest Man to ever live.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us, "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

His greatness allows us to be perfected. Hebrews 10:14 states that Jesus made one sacrifice good for all time for those who are sanctified. Christians are sanctified (set apart) by the blood of Christ, reconciled from our state of sin to God the Father given the great promise of heaven.