

Killing Lazarus

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon 'Killing Lazarus' explores the themes of suffering for Christ, transformation through faith, and the importance of genuine worship amidst challenges.

Duration: 52:04

Scripture: Psalm 23:5, Matthew 5:11-12, John 15:20-21, Romans 12:2, 1 Peter 4:12, 1 Peter 4:19

Topics: "Lazarus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of facing opposition and persecution for his faith in Christ. Despite being placed in a remote department at work, he was able to lead several policemen to Christ through his vocal Christian testimony. The speaker emphasizes the importance of standing firm in the face of reproach and not allowing shame to be placed on believers. He also highlights the message of Lazarus, which is that Jesus gives life and offers hope to honest seekers who are looking for true satisfaction and reality in their lives.

Transcript

I thank you, God, that you have put it in my heart to glorify you. Lord, I ask that you be glorified in everything that is spoken, in all that is said, everything that is understood. Jesus, be glorified.

And I ask you, Father, tonight to take the veil of shame off of your church that the enemy wants to put there on so many lives that have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ and have been engraved with the virtual pen of God. I ask you, Lord, to remove this veil of shame and I ask, O God, that there be a rekindling of joy in the heart. And I thank you for it.

I thank you, Lord, that you're going to defeat the enemy powerfully, strongly tonight. I believe it with all my heart in Jesus' mighty name. Now, how many tonight are suffering because of your testimony for Jesus Christ? Can I see your hands, please? Raise it up nice and high.

You're suffering because you're a Christian. Okay, I thought there would be that many here tonight. 1 Peter 4, verse 12.

Peter says, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of

Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.

On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or as an evildoer or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Now Peter is talking about suffering that has to come, will come, to the lives of those that are godly, those that are truly Christ's. If you belong to Jesus Christ tonight, God is writing a story in you. He's writing the story of his own life.

Actually in verse 14, it says, If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Now this speaks about the person who is saved, walking in an unsaved or ungodly environment, or even worse, an ungodly religious environment. And there is a suddenness of anger that comes against you.

This desire, as it is, of the enemy, to make you feel like you are doing some kind of a shameful thing because you are born again and living for God. Somehow you are substandard, foolish. You are having to experience ridicule, false accusation, all types of things coming against you, only because of the name of Christ.

My wife said that when she spoke of her mother, it was strange, when her mother was suffering and living in darkness and on the verge, really, of perhaps living in despair for the rest of her life. Everybody seemed to be okay, a very religious family in some respects. But when she found Christ as her Savior, and was raised from the dead, and began to live for God, and was clothed and in her right mind, all of a sudden the family became very concerned about her.

And some very not nice things, perhaps in some quarters, began to be spoken. He said, if you are reproached for the name of Christ, you should be happy, because the Spirit of glory and of God, glory, the Greek word for that is doxa, it means the image of God, or it means that which causes Christ in us to be recognized for who He is. And the word for God is theos, which means the name of the true God.

Remember the church of Philadelphia we spoke about last week, where He says, if you go through this open door, which is Christ Himself, He says, I will write my name upon you. And the evidence that Christ's name is being written upon you, or the very nature of Christ is becoming your nature, is the unregenerate around you, those who are lost in their sin, be it blatant sin or religious sin, they're lost, there's an anger that begins to rise in them, because of the true Christ that is being written upon you. In other words, God has written upon you a readable evidence to others that you are His.

They look at you and they know that you're different. Not because you're trying to be different, you're trying to be like Christ. You want to be godly.

You no longer want to do the things that you used to do. You're starting to stand up for truth, even if it may not even be verbal, it's just something in your own heart. You just simply want to walk an honest walk before God.

And all of a sudden, everybody around you seems to have a problem with this. Isn't it strange in a society where people just want to live honestly, speak the truth. They don't want to cheat on their income tax.

They don't want to get paid under the table. They don't want to write false invoices and all the rest. They don't want to backbite or gossip or speak evil of authority and just want to speak right and live for God.

All of a sudden find themselves in this barrage as it is of accusation begins to come against them. The Reims New Testament says it the best. He says, For that which is of the honor and glory and power of God and that which is His Spirit rests upon you.

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, if people see Christ in you, and because they see Christ, something rises in them and they begin to falsely accuse you. Actually, Peter said this is a time to be happy. Because it is evidence that God has written His name on you.

It is evidence. It's not necessarily even a verbal testimony. It's just simply something that you are becoming in Christ.

And an ungodly world has always hated Christ. In John chapter 12, if you go there with me, it can truly be said that a man called Lazarus found himself in a very strange and fiery trial. Now up to this point, if you go back, actually we should start a little back in John chapter 11, he had a testimony of association with Jesus.

And there is no record that that testimony seemed to bother anybody. In John chapter 11, verses 3 to 5, it said, Therefore his sister sent him and said, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick. Verse 5, it says, Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

And so his testimony really was Jesus loves me. And it seems that nobody has a problem with that. Many of you said that before you got saved, didn't you? Jesus loves me.

I can even see children throughout America in church this morning singing these songs, Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so, while parents and clergy who are not in right relationship with God look upon them with piously folded hands and condescending approval. Oh, that's very nice, they say.

We're very happy that Jesus loves you. When Lazarus was sick and dying, and perhaps his testimony was, while Jesus is coming soon, if I can just hold on long enough, he's going to help me. There's no evidence in the Bible that even this brought about what he was about to face in chapter 12.

But you and I know the story. He died. All hope of human or human hope of recovery was lost.

Now Paul the Apostle speaks about this in Romans chapter 7, verse 9. He speaks of the fallen condition of human flesh or human effort. He says, when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. In other words, I thought I was doing all right until I saw the holy standards of God.

I saw the requirements of God to be what he's called me to be. But there was an inward working of death in me that was stronger than any effort I might make to change. And so I died.

I simply gave up the grave as it is shut its mouth upon me. Let me read to you from Psalm 88, the words of a man who was going through this. He says, My soul is full of troubles.

My life draws nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit. I am as a man that has no strength.

I'm free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou remember'st no more, and they're cut off from thy hand. Thou slayed me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the deep. It seemed like people didn't really perhaps have that big of a problem with Lazarus when he was dying.

When he had no strength. When his testimony was simply, Jesus, if I can just hold on, Jesus will help me someday. And I could see the religious crowd coming and giving him consolation and comfort.

And it tells us that after his death they came to comfort Mary and Martha and all of the family. Paul talks about the cry of every true child of God. That cry, when we cry, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I heard his voice, Paul says, in the lowest depths of my despair. And he called me out of his darkness into his marvelous light. And beloved, that's our testimony tonight.

Many of you who are here, you can acknowledge that this is the testimony that God has given you. I had no strength. The best I could say is Jesus loves me.

And the best I could do was hope to hold on until someday I might understand or he might speak a word that brought life into my heart. But I had no power against this inward dwelling or working of sin in me, so I died. And it seems during this whole process in my life, everybody was alright with this.

They were alright with my little surface testimony of Jesus and they were alright with the fact that I was struggling and didn't seem to have victory. Until the day I heard his voice. And I don't know when it happened in your life, but there is a moment, there is a divine moment in every life where we begin to hear the voice of God.

And we begin to look away from human effort. And the testimony moves beyond that which just simply is on the surface of the lips of everyone who calls themselves Christian in any society. And we begin to hear a voice calling us out of darkness and calling us out of death.

We have no power other than what the words of God are beginning to impart to us. We hear God speaking to us and he rolls away the stone of unbelief. And we get up out of our seats.

It can be in a service, it can be at home, it can be in our car, it is somewhere. We begin to hear the voice of God. And we get up and step out of these places of darkness.

And we step into the marvelous light and life of Almighty God through Jesus Christ. And we are born again by the Spirit of God. No more striving in the flesh.

No more surface testimony. We now have the life of God Himself living within us. Not just feelings and theories about God, but God Almighty in the power of the Holy Ghost coming to take up residence within our physical bodies when we have trusted in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

And we are new creations now in Christ Jesus. We are changing from image to image and glory to glory. As we hear God's Word and God's Spirit within us makes this Word a reality.

We see these promises. We know we have no power to fulfill them. But we turn to the One within us who has the power.

And we let our will be entwined with His and we begin to walk with Him. And as we walk with Him with believing hearts, the life of Christ becomes a reality. And we change.

And it becomes miraculous. Image to image and glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now, back in John chapter 12, Lazarus, let me just say for sake of argument, Lazarus is in church.

He's now raised from the dead. Just like many of you are and I am. You're sitting here in church tonight.

You're sitting at the table with Jesus. The Bible says six days before the Passover, He came to Bethany where Lazarus, this is Jesus, where Lazarus was, which had been dead. That's John 12, 1. Whom He raised from the dead.

And there they made Him a supper and Martha served. But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Sitting at the table with Jesus.

That's where many of us are tonight. Raised from the dead. You know you have new life.

You know tonight that the power of the grave and sin cannot hold you anymore. You have been given of God a new mind. You are able now to comprehend the written word of God.

You have a heart of faith to believe as we heard today that every promise in this book is for me. Not for somebody else. Not for some other generation.

This is not a lottery draw. This is the grand prize for everyone who turns to Jesus Christ. Hallelujah.

Every promise in this book is mine. Hallelujah. And God is making it a reality.

And this is why we sit at the table. This is why we open our Bibles in the morning. It's not just to fulfill a time.

We're not under the law anymore. It's not just to say, to be able to say and pacify our hearts. Say, oh God, I spent 20 minutes in your word today.

This is obviously going to be a good day for me. It's not about that. Because we're sitting at the table.

At that table is a banquet laid before us in the presence of our enemies. At this table our minds are renewed. At this table new promises are given to us.

At this table the Holy Spirit takes what Christ won for us on Calvary and begins to show it to us. And said, this is what I'm going to do in you. This is who I'm going to make you.

Yes, you're having trouble with your temper at work. But this is what I'm going to do to you. I'm going to give you patience.

I'm going to take this away. I'm going to chip this away from your life. By faith you're going to be a different person than you are today.

Hallelujah. The Christian life should be an exciting life. You should be getting up like a person who's been left a very lengthy inheritance by a dying relative or a dying father.

And every day just turns another page to find out what new thing has been left in this inheritance. To lay hold of it and say, this is mine. My father gave me this.

I can take this to the bank. This is mine. Not only mine, but it belongs to my children.

Not only my children, but it belongs to my grandchildren. And future generations in my home have been blessed by this incredible inheritance that God has left me through Jesus Christ. This is why we sit at the table.

This is why we open our Bibles and we trust the Holy Spirit to quicken our minds to these promises and then make them a reality as we believe and begin to walk into them. And God brings this newness of life into us. And it's an incredible life.

It's a miraculous life. I wish I had time to tell you everything that God has done for me. Every area that He has touched.

All of the rough edges that He has sanded. All of the confused thinking He's made straight. All of the promises that He has tucked away and I just simply walk in them and see them beginning to unfold.

Little by little, line by line, step by step, the kingdom of God begins to advance as this hand of God begins to write a testimony in me of Christ. Not of me, of Christ. Jesus Christ.

Lazarus is sitting at the table with Jesus. He's no doubt among those who are bringing costly worship to Him. It tells us that, verse 3, that Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair.

And the house was filled with the odor of His ointment. And that's the way it is with many tonight. We're here, we're sitting at the table, and there's costly worship in this house.

There are people who know that nothing of this world is to be compared to the life which Jesus gives. I mean, incredible when you think of it. They're sitting at the table with a living Savior but also a dead man who's brought back to life.

It just doesn't get any better than that. I don't know how else to say it. I mean, how would you feel if you're sitting at the table at home and there's your mother or father or your sister or your brother who is four days dead.

And they're sitting there. And Jesus is there. Folks, it just doesn't get any better than that.

And Mary obviously takes this expensive perfume that some say perhaps was an inheritance. It was perhaps something laid away for the future, given to her, whatever. She just knows there's more in Christ than all of this or anything the world's got to offer me.

There's more. And Lazarus is there among them. And this is a worship scene.

This is worship beyond worship. There's a living Christ at the table. There's an innumerable number of promises ahead of those who are sitting there, listening to every word, I'm sure, that is coming out of his mouth.

Now they're taking a little more attention or stock to what he's saying than perhaps they did before Lazarus died and was raised from the grave. There's incredible perfume of worship that is filling the house. And we have experienced this.

I know it in this house time and again when worship goes beyond singing and becomes a perfume. It is something sweet that is being offered up to God because there are lives here that are yielding. People are yielding their futures.

They're yielding other trusts, perhaps, that the world entrenched very deep into their heart. And they're giving all they've got to God. And you and I have the privilege of being in such a company.

And I thank God for it with all of my heart. And all these people are in this room. But Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.20, in a great house there are different types of vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor.

And so we go a little further down the table. First, we have Jesus, the Savior. We have Lazarus raised from the dead.

We have his sister Mary who's offering up this incredible worship. And she's now got the revelation that it's not just someday in the dear old by and by that we're going to see Christ's life manifested. It's now.

They have the living evidence at the table in her brother. It causes her to go a step beyond, perhaps, what she's ever gone before in times of worship to the Lord. But we also see Judas.

If there's ever a scene that talks to me about how hard this man's heart was, it would have to be this one. I think of the time when Jesus dipped the sop in the cup and offered it to him at the Last Supper. And some say perhaps that was the last offer that Jesus gave to this man of his life.

His heart was so hard, the Bible says that Satan entered into him. And the moment Christ was aware of that, of course, he just said, go and do and do quickly what you have to do. But here's Judas sitting at the table.

Now, you'll find all of these types of people in church. Sad to say, but there are Judas's and perhaps there are some here tonight. They don't know what they are.

I know that in the body of Christ, there are Judas's abounding now in our generation. And the scripture says he he said, why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor? And he said this not because he cared for the poor, because he was a thief and had the bag and bear what was put therein. So at this table, that this worship service is a thief.

He's simply in this for what he can get. He's not in it for what he can give. He's not even moved by Mary's sacrifice.

He's not even seemingly moved by the fact that a dead man who's brought back to life is sitting next to him. We have testimonies in this house of people who are dead in sin, drug addicted, insane, literally. Without God, came to Christ and now you're sitting, you're clothed, you're just as raised as Lazarus was.

You're absolutely back alive again, but perhaps sitting not too far from you in similar proximity as somebody who's here. And is not even interested in this testimony that God has penned into your life, but is only here for what he can get. And covering up his greed with talk of what he might one day do for the

poor.

But he really has no heart for the poor. It's all about financial gain. And folks, let me tell you that this gospel of using the name of Christ for personal gain is a Judas gospel.

It is very rampant in the church of Jesus Christ today. Turn on Christian television and you will see Judas preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I make no apology for that statement.

It is an absolute fact. Also at this table, there are true seekers. Chapter 12 and verse 9 says many people of the Jews, therefore, knew that he was there.

And when they came, not only for Jesus' sake, but they might see Lazarus also, who he had raised from the dead. You see, without doubt, the message of Lazarus is that Jesus gave me life. And there are honest seekers there.

Just as there might be in this house tonight or the Education Annex. Honest seekers of God. You're looking for life.

You know that money doesn't satisfy. You know that the fame and lust and everything that this city says satisfies your soul doesn't satisfy you. That's why you're in the house tonight.

Honest seekers who are looking for reality. And reality comes from the life that can truly say, I used to be dead, but now I am alive in God. I used to think this way, but now I think this way.

I used to be gripped by death and unbelief, but Christ came. I heard his voice. He rolled away the stone.

And now the possibilities before me are unlimited. If he can raise me from the dead, think of what he can do in my life while I live. Think of where he can take me.

Think of what he can make me. Think of how he might be glorified through my life. I was sharing with somebody earlier today, I believe that the call, the cry in the heart of the true Christian is, Father, glorify yourself.

Just as Christ prayed, Oh God, glorify your name in me. I believe that's the cry of the true Christian. Jesus, you've saved me.

You've bought me with your blood. You've raised me out of the death of sin. You've broken the chains of hell off of my life.

Oh Jesus, be glorified in me. Be glorified. Be seen in me.

Be heard in me. Touch through me. Speak through me.

Walk through me. Talk through me. Oh God, I just give you my life in its entirety, and I ask you, Lord, to use it for your glory.

Use it for your glory. God, speak through me. God, don't let people go to hell on my watch.

Don't let the people in my apartment building die in their sin, because they haven't seen you in me. Jesus, be visible. Be evident in my life.

But you see, when we pray this prayer comes, a very, very strange trial can come into your life. Scripture says the chief priests were there as well. In verse 10, it says, But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him, many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.

Incredible. This poor guy is just raised from the dead, and all of a sudden people want to kill him. Has that been your testimony? You've just been raised from the dead by the power of God, and you're encountering this murderous, especially this murderous religious spirit that hates the life of Christ and comes against everything in you that God is doing.

People who say they belong to God and love him also. They seem to want me dead, says Lazarus. It seems they were happier when I was in the grave.

When Teresa and I were young Christians and I was so God touched in those first years, I remember I went to a Christian policeman's conference and cried for three days straight. I never stopped crying for three days. I could not stop weeping.

I was just so grateful for the touch of God. I was so awestruck that he loved me. I was so dumbfounded at the possibility that he could use my life.

I so wanted his touch on my life and so wanted him to use me for his glory and so believed that everybody that spoke the name of Jesus was a Christian. I remember coming back from this conference and we had some friends who said, we're Christians now. Oh, I thought this is wonderful.

We're having a party and Christians are coming. And I thought, this is great. We get to go to a Christian party.

So Teresa and I headed off to a Christian party. And it turned out to be a whole gathering of people who were there for other reasons. They claimed to be Christian, but they were part of a multiple sales organization.

They were very concerned about dream circles and money. And I remember going into that and I started speaking about what God was doing in my life. I was in the kitchen.

Teresa's in the living room. The house is packed. It's a fairly big house.

I started telling people what God was doing in my life, only to find them getting very annoyed with me. They weren't concerned about resurrection life. They were concerned about money.

They were concerned about selling me something. I wasn't interested in buying anything. I was talking about the life of Christ.

And they started talking about money and I started telling them, no, that's not what it's about at all. 1 Timothy 6, Paul says, the love of money is the root of all evil. Which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

And I would go on and tell them. And Paul said, but thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness and true godliness. And I began quoting the scripture and they began getting very, very, very upset with me.

And I was quite surprised. I thought these are supposed to be Christians. And then I ended up telling them, I don't think what you have is Christianity.

I'm just a young Christian. But I don't think what you have is Christianity. The debate abated a little bit in the kitchen, only to hear a whole bunch of people yelling at my wife, Teresa, in the living room.

And you see, this religious thing that they were doing had its own priest. They had a priest there. He had all his clerical garb.

He was half drunk. He was sitting in the living room. And he was arguing with my wife.

Now, if you know Teresa, she's not really one to back down from a confrontation. I say that in a nice way. And I could hear his voice raised in anger.

She had the audacity to be talking about this life in Christ to this group of people that were gathered around dream circles and money. And I remember Teresa stopping. And she got quiet in the living room.

And she looked this priest right in the eye with a living room full of people who are supposed to be Christians. And she said, what is it about Jesus Christ that offends you? And it got very, very, very quiet. And we realized that we were no longer welcome at this Christian party.

John 15. Jesus says it this way in verse 18. He says that the world hate you.

You know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

But these things will they do unto you for my namesake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come, verse 22, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin. But now they have no cloak for their sin.

You see, it's through you and me that God will speak to a sin darkened generation. It's through you and me that Christ will write a story of life that he offers to those who trust in him. And people can be very content in religiousness and sin that has a cloak of God on it, because of some pretended charitable objective.

But the moment the true Christian walks in and the life of Christ in them is being manifested, they have no more cloak for their sin. And if you are a true Christian, if you are walking in the life of Christ, you don't have to look for trouble, trouble will look for you. You don't have to try to get into difficult situations, they will find you.

The world cannot speak well of you because the world hates Christ. And the moment Christ is seen in you, you will be brought into a spiritual confrontation between light and darkness. Not that you desire it to happen.

And many of you know this, you've come to Christ, you're in your Bible, you love God, you just want to go to work. You just want to do your job. And you find yourself in this strange trial.

You're not looking for a trial, you don't want to be in a trial. But Peter said, this is a reason for you to rejoice. If you find yourself in this strange trial, it means God is speaking through you.

Christ is seen in you. Because Christ is seen, those who have a false religiousness or a false concept of safety and assurance for the future, their cloak is removed. And the true anger that they feel against God now begins to be manifested towards you.

Remember, he said, I have written upon you who I really am. Paul said everyone who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Everyone.

You simply can't escape it. And back again in 1 Peter 4, verse 12, he said, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their party is evil spoken of, but on your party is glorified. Actually, Jesus said it this way in Matthew chapter 5. Let me just read it to you.

I love this verse of Scripture because he says, if you are persecuted, Matthew chapter 5 and verse 11, he said, Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Rejoice and be exceeding glad.

Now, this is the command of Christ. When people come against you and slander you and say false things about you and accuse you, become angry with you, as in the case of Lazarus, they really desire your demise. Whether it's that you just be, in a sense, thrown out of your position at work.

They desire to extinguish your testimony because many are believing or at least convicted because of Christ in your life. I spoke today to a former construction worker. He told me, he said, on the job, he said, I got saved and I just wanted to walk honestly.

But the union I was working for was paying everybody under the table. And I couldn't be paid that way because it wasn't honest. And so I went to them and said, you know, if you're going to pay me, you have to give me a paycheck.

You have to have a stub with it. You have to do it honestly. And he said the incredible anger I faced from some workers and from those in authority saying, why do you have to cause so much trouble here? If it weren't for you, everything would be fine.

The same worker found out one day that the company he was working for had erroneously overpaid him and other workers as well and could not keep the money in his pocket because he knew it wasn't right. They had issued checks by mistake. He went to the foreman, the leaders and told them.

And the incredible ire rose up from others who tried to pocket the money, even though they knew that it wasn't earned or deserved. And he said the constant barrage, the constant verbal barrage that they brought against me made me feel ashamed. Now, isn't that interesting? He said, I felt ashamed.

He said, because they made me feel like I was doing wrong. And that's exactly what the devil will try to do. He tried to take the lives of those who are truly living for Christ and cast this veil of shame on you.

As if because you're speaking truth and you're not backbiting and you're wanting to do things honestly and you're doing a decent day's work. And everything else that comes along with living for Christ, as if that's a shameful thing. And somehow you are the source of discontent in your office, your apartment building, wherever it is that you work, or your family.

Somehow it's because of you. If it wasn't for you, everything would be fine. No, the reality is Christ has written his life in you.

And because of that, they have no more cloak for their sin. Because of that, there's conviction in their midst. And the Christ that they will not bow their knee to because he is seen in you, they begin to hate the Christ in you.

And Jesus said, when this happens, you are to rejoice. You are not to be made ashamed. You are not to come under this blanket of shame.

You are not to allow people to put you down and make you feel like you're substandard, you're a troublemaker. No, you are living for God. And he said, great is your reward in heaven.

In the manner they are persecuting you, they have persecuted the prophets who have come before you. Jesus is saying, I have raised up in past generations godly men and women who have stood and confronted the evil of their generation. And those generations rose up against them.

And yes, some of them even died for what they believed in. But now they are with Christ in heavenly places. Now they are in a place of exceeding glory.

Now they are assured that they are going to rule and reign with him for all of eternity. And Jesus said, in the manner that they have treated them, they are treating you, which proves that I have written my life in you. If the world speaks well of you, there is something wrong in your testimony.

If people who are corrupt financially see no wrong in their action when you are in their midst. If people can tell dirty jokes in the lunchroom and you are there snickering along with the rest of them. If there is no testimony of Christ in you, if there is no conviction to an ungodly world, something is wrong.

Jesus said, you are not to allow this blanket of shame to be put by the ungodly on you. You are not to allow them to take you. See, it is all about heaven's perspective.

If our focus is all about the here and now, then they will succeed. If our focus is eternity, if we are seeking things of heaven, if we are seeking things where Christ sits in the right hand of God, if we are looking to glorify God in a fallen world, then our whole perspective changes. We walk in knowing that we will be slandered, knowing that there will be some difficult days.

Folks, I knew what this is all about. When I was a police officer, I had people who wouldn't work with me. I had guys get right out of the patrol car because I told them, I said, you manhandle anybody, I'm not lying under oath for you.

I won't cover up for you. You do things by the book if you work with me. I had guys get out of the car, walk into the station house and tell some lies to the supervisors.

I don't even know to this day what they said. I just know the supervisors told them they didn't have to work with me, and the next guy would come out and sit down in the car. But I would hold to the standard that I believed of truth that God was calling me to live under.

I would tell every man I worked with, I said, you've already heard things about me, and they'd all, yeah, sure have. I'd tell them, I'm going to tell you one time what I believe. It's going to take me 15 minutes if you want to hear it, and I'll never speak to you about it again.

Never, unless you ask me. Because they're in the driver's seat, they'd say, okay, tell me. I'd tell them the whole story, how I came to Christ, the whole thing.

And at the end, it would be over, but they couldn't lay it down. Isn't it amazing? Day after day, it would be as if the conversation never ended. That part you said about, and what about this part, and what about that part? And I was able to lead quite a few policemen to Christ by standing for truth.

I faced tremendous opposition. I remember one of my commanders coming into the office where I was working because a mini revival broke out. They stuck me way in the back department to try to get me away from the other.

I was a very vocal Christian. They stuck me way in the back with seven or eight other guys. I forget how many it was in this kind of remote department.

And within a few months, there was, when I went in, there was, I think, for sake of numbers, let's say there's eight of us. There's me, a Christian. There's the seven other guys.

Within a few months, there were seven born again, filled with the Holy Ghost Christians in that department. My supervisor came in, pointed at me. He said, you are finished.

Your career is finished. You're out of here. We're going to get you, basically.

The Bible says you're not to allow them to put that shame on you. I'm standing for Christ. I've done nothing wrong.

I worked twice as hard as everybody else. I made a point of them never being able to point to my work and say it was insufficient. I obeyed orders.

When I was told to do something, I did it. I worked very hard. They could never fault me in what I was doing.

And then one day, a huge scandal hit the police department. I don't want to tell you what it was, but it was a huge scandal. It went in the papers.

It was all over the place. And the whole department was being dragged through the mud. And the police chief said, we need somebody to represent us who's clean.

I'll never forget my supervisor calling me. He looked like he wanted to throw up on his desk. He said, we know that your life is clean.

Isn't that amazing? God will turn it all around. He said, we need somebody that can work unsupervised. We need somebody to represent us in the public.

I knew exactly why. The whole department was being dragged through the mud. I told them, I walked into this one office and guys were doing everything but hiding under their desks.

They said, this is going to be awful. We're going to lose our families and everything. I told them, I said, guys, if you lived right for God, you wouldn't have to live in this kind of fear.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad wasn't always easy. But it's better to obey God. You remember when they arrested Peter and others and they threatened them and they said it's better to obey God than man.

So they beat them and then sent them out. And the Bible says they just rejoiced in the fact that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his namesake. Counted worthy to suffer shame.

Rejoice. It's a different way of thinking. Now, let's finish this in first Peter, chapter four and verse 19.

Well, verse 16 says, if any man suffers as a Christian. Let him not be ashamed. But let him glorify God on this behalf of that means because of this.

If you are suffering as a Christian, do not be ashamed. It means the spirit of glory and God is resting on you. Do not be ashamed.

Do not let the shame of this world sit upon you. Do not be bowed down and coward from living for Jesus Christ. And standing, yes, not in an obnoxious way, but standing in the love of God and for the truth of God.

Caring for the souls of men enough to stand up and be counted among those who are the bride of Jesus Christ. In verse 19 says, wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God. Commit the keeping of their souls to him and well doing.

As unto a faithful creator. If you are suffering tonight, God's word tells you. Commit the keeping of your soul to him.

Which means, God, I'm not able to do this. But you are able to do it for me and through me. I'm sort of like Lazarus in this.

I'm in the grave and I have so little power. But God, I'm hearing your word tonight. And you will give me the strength to stand unashamed.

Unashamed before a fallen generation. Unashamed of the God who loved them enough to die for them. Unashamed of the God who instead of writing off a whole world of sinners has written his testimony in my life.

Unashamed of those who in their own ignorance are opposing their own salvation. Unashamed of the fact that the spirit of God and the glory of Christ rests on my life. Unashamed.

This was the marked testimony of those of the first church in the book of Acts. They were unashamed. They would stand tall like the apostle Paul even in chains before kings.

And they could be bound in a sense in their physical body by those in authority. But they were unashamed of the Christ who had embraced them and whom they had embraced. It's time for a church age to rise up that is unashamed of the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Unashamed to speak the truth. Unashamed to do what is right. Unashamed to make a declaration.

I'm saved. I'm going to heaven. Unashamed to say I'm changing day to day.

God is doing the miraculous by his life within me. Unashamed to declare that the Bible is the truth. It's the word of God.

Unashamed. If you're suffering for the testimony of Christ, the scripture says to commit your soul to God and trust him for the power to keep on doing good. The Holy Spirit told me today especially as I was praying about this message tonight that he was going to lift the veil of shame off of many.

You've been made to feel bad because you're a Christian. You've been made to feel bad in your own family some of you. As if there's something wrong with you.

Because you have eternal life now. Because you've been raised from the dead. Because you sit at the table with Jesus.

Because you're willing to give your all for the cause of Christ. That somehow there's something wrong with you. Would you stand please.

If this is speaking to your heart, education annex, balcony, main sanctuary. If you've been pressed down. You're hurting.

You want the veil of shame off of your life. Come meet me here. We're going to pray together.

I'm going to believe God to take this thing off of you. You're going to go into the workplace. You're going to go into your family, your neighborhood.

And you're not going to be ashamed of the testimony of Jesus Christ. And it's a step of faith you're taking. You're committing your soul to the keeping power of God.

Unashamed. Students that are here, don't be ashamed. Higher learning without God is simply ignorance in another form.

Don't be ashamed of the fact that you're a Christian. Construction workers, don't be ashamed that you're a Christian. Stand up for God.

Actually, better way to put that, let God stand up in you. Give him the keeping of your soul. Young people that have come to Christ and you live in a drug infested neighborhood perhaps.

You don't have to be ashamed. You're not substandard because you're a Christian. The spirit of God and the glory of God are resting on you.

You don't have to be ashamed. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Now, Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart. Lord, this is a spiritual transaction. You told me that you were going to lift this veil of shame.

You're going to take these thoughts that the enemy has tried to superimpose on the testimony of Christ. On so many of these lives. And you're going to remove them sovereignly in a moment of time.

God, you're just going to brush them away with your presence. Lord, we ask you tonight for joy. I ask you, almighty God, for the release of joy in these lives that are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus Christ.

Counted worthy. Counted by God worthy. Lord, you look down upon these and you said, here's a worthy vessel.

Here's a vessel in which I can write my name. Here's a vessel in which I can inscribe a testimony of my life. Counted worthy to suffer shame.

Oh, God, we thank you from the depths of our heart. We praise you, God. Not only for the good times, but for the hard times.

Not only when we're listened to, but when we're ignored and slandered. Jesus, thank you that you promised to bring everyone who trusts in you through the water and through the fire and through the flood. It's always been the testimony of your people.

The world will cast the Daniels into the lion den, but you will keep us alive. You will shut the mouth of the lion, oh God. You will keep us alive in you, oh God.

You'll not let the world close its mouth upon us. You'll not let death, oh God, devour us. My God, we thank you that you're establishing in your church a testimony.

In our generation, in where we live, in our workplace and in our homes. And in our families, a testimony of your grace and your glory. God, thank you from the depths of our heart.

We give you praise and glory tonight. We thank you, Lord, from the very depths of our hearts. We give you praise.

We thank you, God. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, mighty God. We bless your name, oh God. We bless your name that we are counted worthy to suffer shame.

Worthy, oh God. Worthy, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah.

Lord God, pray with me tonight. Lord Jesus, into your hands I commit my soul. Keep me, God.

Keep the testimony that you have written in my life and in my heart. Protect me from those who want to take my life, to take away from me the testimony of my new life in Jesus Christ. I'm not the one who should be ashamed.

They should be ashamed of their rejection of God, their spiritual ignorance and their darkness. Oh God, I pray you give me a tender heart and a loving heart for every person who opposes their own salvation by denying the Christ that is in me. Jesus, cause me to stand and cause me to love them.

Love them through me. Speak to them through me. Bless them through me.

God, let my life be a testimony set upon a hill that all who come into the room may see the light and life of Jesus Christ. I commit my life to this. And you commit yourself, Lord, to keeping me until the day that you take me home to live with you forever.

Until that day, I'm going to obey you and I'm going to rejoice. I'm going to rejoice. Hallelujah.

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