

Praising God at the Dung Gate

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon encourages believers to praise God even in the most challenging and unglamorous situations, exemplified by the Dung Gate in Nehemiah's time.

Duration: 58:45

Scripture: Nehemiah 12:27, 1 Corinthians 4:14, Ephesians 3:13

Topics: "Praising God"

Description

In this sermon, Paul, who is writing from prison, urges the believers to walk worthy of their calling. He acknowledges the difficulties and trials they have faced, emphasizing that their ability to overcome these challenges is not based on human strength alone. Paul encourages them not to lose heart or become cowardly because of his own trials, as God is using them to draw others closer to Him. He reminds them that God understands their struggles and has a plan for their lives. Paul concludes by expressing his willingness to endure trials for the sake of others, demonstrating that Christ is all they will ever need.

Transcript

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Sounds like some of us are having a time already. Welcome you to Times Square Church today. If you're visiting today, I trust that you've already been blessed by the presence of Jesus Christ as we corporately gather to worship Him.

Nehemiah chapter 12, my message title, just go to Psalms and go backwards, Job, and you'll get to Esther, I think it is, then Nehemiah. I'm going to speak a message entitled, Praising God at the Dung Gate. Praising God at the Dung Gate.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you Lord for such a wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit today. I thank you God for such great grace and glory that you give to us that we can stand and praise you.

That we can glorify your name, Jesus, even in the midst of sometimes the most difficult circumstances. You give an empowerment to all who call on your name. I'm asking you today Lord to give me a quickening of the Holy Spirit and enable me to speak this message in a manner that can be understood by everyone who's in this house.

God deliver me from all forms and ways of speaking that would make this message complicated and give me the intelligence to speak it simply. Father, I thank you God that you're going to touch all of our hearts. You're going to touch every life and bring our thinking in line with heaven today.

Jesus, I thank you that there will be a shout of great glorious deliverance and victory at the end of this service today and throughout this entire day. Lord, I give you all the praise and all the glory. Let your kingdom come in Jesus' name.

Praising God at the Dung Gate. Nehemiah chapter 12 beginning at verse 27. Now this is the time that after the children of Israel have come back from the Babylonian captivity.

This is the complete return. You know the return came back over the course of many years in three different stages. First to rebuild the temple, then to reestablish the sacrifice in the form of true worship.

And then lastly to rebuild the wall. That was Nehemiah's task round about Jerusalem to reestablish the city as it is. And this reestablishing of the city was the last magnificent as it is work of God in the Old Testament.

Now Malachi was a contemporary of Nehemiah. He is the last writer in the Old Testament. After Malachi's writing there was a period of 400 years of silence until John the Baptist.

And then subsequently the appearing of Jesus Christ at the temple. But this was the last work of the Old Testament. To reestablish the city, reestablish the temple, the walls.

And then finally to reestablish and reinstitute praise. True genuine praise to God for all the things that He had done. For the things that they had accomplished had not been in their own strength and they were very well aware of it.

If you'll take that a little farther in the New Testament and the Old Testament as well. Prophet Isaiah in speaking about a coming day of fiery judgment literally on the face of the earth. He said even in the midst of the fire there's songs of praise coming from all over the world.

Praise of glory to the righteous one. I believe that Christ is coming back for a people. And He's coming back for a people especially in the final hours of time.

That have really learned what it means to praise and to worship God. I'm hoping with all my heart that we're going to see something in this story today. Verse 27, Nehemiah chapter 12.

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places. The worshipers in other words. To bring them to Jerusalem to keep the dedication with gladness.

Both with thanksgiving and with singing. With cymbals and psalteries and harps. Similar to what we've experienced in the sanctuary this morning.

The sons of the singers gathered themselves together both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem. And from the villages of Napotha. And also from the house of Gilgal and out of the fields of Geba and Amazveth.

For the singers had builded them village round about Jerusalem. The priests and the Levites purified themselves and purified the people and the gates and the wall. And then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall.

And appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks. Whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall towards the dung gate. Now go to verse 40.

So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God. And I and the half of the rulers with me. Verse 43.

Also that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced. For God had made them rejoice with great joy. The wives also and the children rejoiced.

So that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. There was a rejoicing in the city that could be heard far beyond the natural containment as it was of the walls of that city. So that the work would be final that God had done.

The Holy Spirit led Nehemiah to gather together all of the worshippers. Whether or not they were living within the city at that time. And he formed them into two processions.

One was led by himself and the other by the prophet or priest Ezra. Their job was to march on the wall. To sing and to praise God.

And to meet shortly after at an appointed place by the temple for corporate worship. And really realistically that's what it's like in the church of Jesus Christ. We are called into the city by God's grace.

The Bible says the Holy Spirit places us in this body as he sees fit. We are sent to that place where God has appointed us. Where we are to worship him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

We are to love God with everything in us. We are to serve him with the strength that he gives us to do that with. And one day we are going to be gathered.

We sang about it. That's why I wanted to hear that song. Soon we are going to be gathered in a central place.

They were dispersed. They walked in two different groups around the wall. They stopped to praise God at appointed places.

But ultimately one day they gathered together before the throne. And that's where you and I are going to be. And that is really going to be the culmination of all things.

We are down here on the earth. We are in New York City this morning. Times Square.

We are worshiping God here. Each one of us have respective circumstances that we are living in. We are called to worship God there.

All of us have callings in the church of Jesus Christ. We are called to worship God there. But one day these things are all going to be over.

And all the true worshipers are going to be gathered together and taken to the throne of God. And we are going to stand before him and worship God forever. We are going to shout.

We are going to praise. We are going to dance. We are going to sing.

If we have any crowns of any achievement, the Bible clearly says we will be taking them off and casting them at his feet. We will know that we are not worthy for any of the things that we have have all been given to us by the power of Almighty God. And I think about how much they had to thank God for.

The people gathered by Nehemiah and Ezra had been sovereignly released. Now you know that they had been in captivity because of their disregard of the word of God. And of course if we were to look out today among our own midst, there are many who have that testimony.

Say, Pastor, I was raised perhaps in a Christian home. I had some knowledge of God, but I disregarded the knowledge. And what a mess my life became.

I was overpowered by my enemies and brought into a snare and a captivity. And I have to say honestly before God that only the grace of God brought me out. It was as if a decree was made to release me.

And all of a sudden the gates of my enemy opened up and released me and I was allowed to come back to God. And not only allowed to come back, but I was led by God in my journey. And that's why you're even here many of you today.

You are, whether you even know it or not, you've been led by God. He has kept you. He's strengthened you.

He's empowered you. He's called you with a holy calling. And you have been empowered to do what you're doing.

And empowered by God to be what you are today. In only 52 days, in spite of all the opposition that was around them, out of a heap of rubble that was left after Jerusalem had been invaded and destroyed, out of that rubble they rebuilt the wall and they rebuilt the gates which had been burned with fire. An incredible accomplishment, really a miraculous accomplishment.

You remember last week I shared that in the midst of even discouragement at rebuilding the temple, God had given one of his prophets a vision of heaven. Of an endless supply of oil being poured down into those that were doing his work. And he said to him, it's not by might, it's not by power, but it's by my spirit, saith the Lord.

This is the source of your strength. This is how you are building. This is where your life comes from.

It's not coming out of human ingenuity. It's not a result of human effort. It's got nothing to do with you.

You simply obeyed me when I called you out of captivity. You followed me as I began to lead you, as best as you knew how. And I subsequently empowered you to build and to become something that you are not.

And I've given you strength and power to be another person than what you were when I called you. I see the people in Nehemiah's day heading off to worship God in different places, yet they're still all in the same city. And thanks be to God, we are all moving towards a time, as I said earlier, when we are going to stand before the throne of God.

We are in this city, this New Jerusalem as it is, and we are worshipping God. And I look forward to the day when I'm going to be able to cast off this frailty and put on strength and cast off this mortality and put on immortality and stand before the throne of God forever. I don't think our minds can comprehend what that's going to be like.

I don't think we can even begin to lay hold of it. If we truly even had a tiny glimpse of it, it would cause our circumstances on the earth to become so dim. We would be so unmoved by circumstances around us, because here we have no continuing city and we know that we're seeking another one which is soon to come.

Now, Nehemiah divided this group into two different distinct groups and he told them which way to go to worship. And the first group headed off to worship and to praise at the dung gate. Now, this is very interesting.

The very first gate that is mentioned where the people were to walk along the wall glorifying God with symbols and psalteries and harps and all these things, and they were to stop and give God glory was at the dung gate. It's the first one mentioned of all the gates. Now, at this time there are 11 gates in Nehemiah's day in Jerusalem.

And there are some awesome gates. There are gates with a history. There are gates such as the beautiful gate or the sheep gate or the fountain gate where water is daily brought into the city and the history of military victory when this gate was properly used even against the enemies of God.

But he said, no, those gates are very glorious, but I want you to stop first and worship at this place because you're going to learn something here. Now, the Holman Bible Dictionary tells us that it's, as I said earlier, one of the 11 gates of Jerusalem during Nehemiah's time. It's located in the southwest corner of the wall, and it was used for the disposal of rubbish, garbage, and dung, which is human excrement.

This was the very purpose of the dung gate. Everything that was trash literally was taken out of that gate. It led out to the Valley of Hinnom, and the Valley of Hinnom was a very inglorious place.

It had a history of idol worship, veil worship, and child sacrifice. So this is a totally inglorious place. There's nothing glorious about it.

There never will be anything glorious about it. It leads out to a place of no reputation, no report. I'm sure that if you walked into the city, it would be hard.

If somebody said, well, oh, you work at one of the gates. What gate do you work at? The dung gate. There's no sense of majesty there.

You're not one that carries water into the city. You're one that carries something else out. There is no reputation at that gate.

Now, sometimes we are called to worship God in places which appeal to none of our natural senses. These places give no comfort. They present no hope of future happiness or fulfillment.

And, beloved, our natural inclination is not to go there. And if we have to, we try to get out as quickly as possible and get to some other gate. Now, I can see being in that first group when Nehemiah split the worshipers into two parts and said, okay, you go to the dung gate.

If they're human like you and I are, the natural inclination would be, well, how about if they go to the dung gate and we go to the water gate or the gate of the fountain? I'm not really there yet. I really don't want to worship there. It's like coming into the church today as one of your pastors and dividing the sanctuary into two and say, well, this group over here, you're going to be the worshipers.

You're going to take the offering. You're all going to be baptized the Holy Ghost and be preachers of the gospel. You're going to do signs and wonders and miracles.

You're going to be known and have reputation and report throughout the city and all throughout the world. And this group over here, you're going to be in charge of cleaning the toilets at Times Square Church. Is it possible to get to some other gate? Is it possible to go another way? If I were to do that today, there'd be a lot of people.

Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. Shifting places to get over to the other side. And you'd have your scripture.

The Bible says, let us go to the other side. And I'm going to the other side. I don't want to worship with these people over here.

You see, everyone disobedient always has their scripture or wants to get out of something. Paul, if you go to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Now, Paul had to deal with this. The Corinthian church was an immature church.

They were doctrinally immature. Paul had to deal with selfishness in this church and strife and division. And some say, I'm of Paul and Apollos and others of Cephas and others of Christ.

They were a church that really didn't deal with sin in their midst. There was an ancestral relationship going on and they seemingly disregarded it and didn't consider it important to deal with it. But I feel in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 that Paul begins to get to the root of the immaturity.

Because it was a theology that had come into the Corinthian church. And the root of that theology was the seeking of self. In other words, in the Corinthian church it was kind of an every man for himself attitude.

Every man seeking his own glory. They were gravitating. They were turning to another message, another gospel.

Where they could only praise God under certain conditions and in certain places. Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 8. This is what Paul says. He says, now you are full.

Now you are rich. And you have reigned as kings without us. And I would to God you did reign that we also might reign with you.

Now Paul is saying, listen. Here's your theology. Your theology is that you are full.

Actually the word for full means like a container that has the equivalent of 75 gallons of liquid in it. You are gravitated to a gospel that is about self. And the fulfillment of self.

And everything that self has to offer. And you are rich. And he said, now he's speaking this very tongue in cheek.

You have to understand. And you have reigned as kings without us. Now Paul is saying, here you are.

You're full. You're rich. And you're kings.

You're ruling and reigning now. Everyone wants to praise at the king's gate. You are all the head and nobody's the tail.

You all have a wonderful destiny. And you've all found it. And now you're all rulers.

Everyone's a ruler. Can you imagine if in Times Square Church everybody was leading? Can you imagine the chaos that would be in the church? Where everyone says, thank you Lord for the call to here. But I feel personally more fulfilled over here.

And so there's always a preacher that will come and minister to that need. The need of self elevation. The need of self seeking.

The need to be full as it is without God. To be rich without Christ. To be reigning with no authority.

And Paul says, I wish you were reigning because I'd like to join you. And reign with you. Verse 9 he says, I think that God has set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death.

For we're made a spectacle to the world and to the angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong.

You are honorable, but we are despised. You see, Paul is creating a contrast. Here's the theological problem of the Corinthian church.

They were embracing a message that wasn't the message of Christ. It wasn't the message of the cross. It was all about self.

It was all about success. It was all about prosperity. It was all about being somebody now that you're a Christian.

And Paul says, well, you think you're there. But I tell you, if that's the case, why has God left us behind? Why are we who are apostles in the church of Jesus Christ, if you are so powerful, why are we so weak? If you are so honored, why are we so despised? Have you found something we don't know? In other words, have you discovered something that we're not aware of? Even unto this present hour, he says, we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. And labor, working with our own hands.

Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we entreat.

We are made as the filth of the world and as the off-scouring of all things unto this day. In other words, Paul is saying, we are worshiping at the dung gate. This is where we have been assigned.

This is what our life is about. We are considered the off-scouring. The religious don't want anything to do with us.

The self-seeking hate us. The unsaved world mock us. But yet we move on with God.

And I write not these things to shame you, verse 14. But as my beloved sons, Paul said, I warn you. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. Paul said, follow me, even if you don't understand it.

Hear the words that I'm speaking to you and understand that the gospel that I'm preaching to you is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now he goes on. If you go ahead to the book of Ephesians chapter 3. He goes on to further define the reason why God had called him to learn to worship in very difficult places.

Ephesians chapter 3, verse 13. Now Paul says, wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you which is for your glory. The word for faint means lose heart or become cowardly.

And the word for glory means it's something of God which may attract your attention and make you strong also. You know when the Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory. That means we have failed to lay hold of the image and the character of God.

The very nature of God is not in us. And Paul says, I don't want you to become cowardly because of my trials. Paul says, you're aware of the trials that I've gone through.

And of course the church was of Paul's day. The shipwrecks, the beatings, the imprisonments, the stonings, being left for dead. All of the trials that Paul had gone through.

Perils of the sea and perils among false brethren. He said at one time we despaired even of living. We had only the sentence of death in ourselves and trusted in God who could raise us from the dead.

We were pressed out, he says, above measure. In other words, there was no human ability to get through our trial. It was so difficult.

Paul said, I would not have you ignorant brethren of the trouble that came to us when we were in Asia. But he said, I don't want you to lose heart and become cowardly because of my trials. Because God is doing something in these places in me which he is doing to attract you.

To get your attention so that you too can be made strong. Paul said, when I have found myself the weakest, that's when I have become the strongest. I have found the power to praise him even in the worst of places.

In the most difficult circumstances. And Paul's, I believe that Paul's understanding, having been enlightened by the Holy Ghost, brought him to the place of understanding that this was never going to change. That Paul's life was always going to be a difficult one.

You remember when Ananias came to him after his Damascus road experience, the Holy Spirit had spoken, or Christ had spoken to Ananias and said, he's a chosen vessel and I'm going to show him the great things and he must suffer for my name's sake. Paul knew his life was appointed to be one of suffering. But Paul said, I've laid hold of something and I want you to see it.

Verse 14, he said, for this cause, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. For this cause, Paul said, I bow my knee at whatever gate I'm found. I bow my knee to God in whatever circumstance I find myself.

I bow my knee whether I'm being blessed or whether I'm suffering want. Whether I'm abounding or whether I'm in need. Whether I'm in safety or whether I'm in peril.

Whether I'm warm or whether I'm cold. Whether I'm free or whether I'm captive. Paul says, I bow my knee for this cause.

That you might understand that Almighty God through Jesus Christ has promised all sufficiency. Everything you will ever need is found in Him, no matter where you are. You don't have to change your circumstance to praise God.

Everything you need is found exactly where you are. And Paul says, that's why God has allowed me to suffer these things. That's why I bend my knee.

I bow my knee to these trials. Verse 16, here's the reason. That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

Paul says that you might see where my strength comes from. That you would cast off false theology whose sole focus is to get out of trial. Sole focus is to reign without authority.

And to rule without power. And to be rich without wealth. Paul said that you would cast this off.

And see something in me that would ground you so deeply in God. That you would understand by faith, verse 17, being rooted and grounded in love. And you might be able to comprehend with all the saints.

What is the breadth and length and depth and height. And to know the love. That means the benevolent love.

It means the giving love of God. Which passes knowledge. That you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul says, I bow my knee to my trials. I bow my knee at the gate that God appoints to my life. For your sake.

To prove to you that Christ is all every man will ever need. That's the whole reason for my life. That's why I go through what I go through.

It's to prove to you that Jesus Christ is enough. Hallelujah. Now, he said to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

According to the power that works in us. Unto him be glory in the church. By Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen. Paul says, oh, I pray according to the God who lives within us. Who can do more than we even ask or think.

According to his power. Oh, that he would be glorified in his church. That he would be glorified by the world looking at God's people and seeing another spirit.

Not the spirit of the world that seeks everything for himself. Every man desiring to trample on others. That he might have the preeminence.

But that they might see Christ. That they might understand that there is a God who sits at the throne of all power. World without end.

He goes to verse 4, chapter 4, verse 1. He says, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you. Now, he wrote this from prison. That you would walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

That's an incredible call. Paul says, I beseech you that you walk worthy where you are called. Not where we want to be, but where we're called.

Where we are in life. What God has dealt to us as it is. Some head off to the temple beautiful, the gate beautiful.

Wonderful for them. Others head off to the dung gate. Equally wonderful for them.

You're going to see that in a minute. You walk worthy where you're called. I think of Anna, Luke chapter 2. A prophetess as it is.

The Bible says that in Luke 2, verse 36. She was of great age. And she had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

In other words, here's Anna starting out. Perhaps loving the Lord. She was married.

And seven years later, her husband died. Here's a woman who, forgive my expression, but she's had a dung gate life experience. It's not desirable.

Death has come into her home. She lost perhaps the soul mate of her youth. She lost a lot of plans for the future.

She was no stranger to heartache and tears. And her life experience was not a good one. In some respect, in the physical respect.

She never found another husband, obviously. There was never a replacement for the pain and the sorrow that came into her life. But the Bible says, even though she was a widow of about 84 years of age.

She departed not from the temple. But served God with fastings and prayers night and day. She made a right choice.

Even though she was at a gate she'd rather not have been at. She made the choice to worship God there. She made the choice not to blame God.

Not to blame others. Not to use Christ to better her physical circumstance. Her prayers were not every day for a new husband.

Prayers not every day for another gate to worship at. Lord, I've been here long enough. This is a dung gate.

I would rather God have all of this taken out of my life and thrown into a heap. I'd rather go to the gate beautiful. I'd rather do something else.

But Lord, this seems to be where you planted me. And for up until she was 84 years of age, she was... I don't know how many years that would have been. I don't know when she got married.

They normally get married very young in those days. So she could have been 25 perhaps when her husband died. And so for over 50 years, she is in the temple daily praising God and serving Him.

And coming in that instant... Now this is the time when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus in to be dedicated. She gave thanks to the Lord and spake of Him that is Christ to all that look for redemption in Jerusalem. Incredible.

Here's a woman who's dealt a hard experience by life. But she makes the choice to worship there. Not sitting and longing to go to somewhere else.

Not plea bargaining with God saying, Lord, if you'll just take me out of here, just think of the worshipper I'm going to be. Think of how I'll praise you if I can join those down at the fountain gate or the gate beautiful or some other gate. If you'll just get me out of this place, I will praise you with all of my heart.

Many, many people live there. Come into the church, make those kind of pleas and prayers for 10, 15 years and then finally get fed up thinking God has failed them. God says, I didn't fail you.

I put you exactly where you were called to be. I put you where you were needed to be in my kingdom because I wanted to show others around my glory. I wanted to show others around that I am the all sufficiency for those who make the choice to praise me in spite of the place in the city they find themselves in.

And then comes Mary and Joseph and all the priests are doing their thing. Nobody knows that anything is unusual this day. They're preparing to circumcise this child.

They're going about their daily business. There's scores of people coming in with their lambs and goats and doves and offering sacrifice. Everything's carrying on as it always has.

And God Almighty has come into the temple and nobody knows it. But an old man does and Anna does. You see why she knew him? Because she says, I know the one who has been my source of supply all these years of my life.

I know him. I know him. Hallelujah.

God puts some in places of hardship. You'll never be able to confess your way out of it. And don't even try.

But find Christ in that place and God Almighty will give you a revelation that nobody else in your generation has. Nobody else. You want to find Jesus.

If you want true words of comfort in the church, go to those that have suffered and walked with God. Go to those with gray hair that have walked through hell and back in their walk in the church. And you will find

comfort in those that made the choice to serve God.

They have the ability to see Christ in everything. They have the ability to pull God into every situation and see the source of supply that heaven has sent for their every need. I think also the Philippian jailer.

The man that put Paul and Silas in prison and was part at least of their pain and their wounding. Coming to Christ. Going home and washing their stripes.

A changed man. His whole house seeing the transformation in his life and all of his children and family being baptized. But then he's called back to his old job.

Now the Bible doesn't say that but we can certainly draw the inference because he was back in the prison when Paul and Silas were called for. Incredible. It's a dungate job.

And some who are listening to my voice this morning in the annex in here. That's what you would consider what you do. There's no status there.

There's no self-satisfaction. The self-satisfaction is all gone. There's no desire to be there.

It's a stinky smelly place with vile off times people cursing and profanity. And even those who are working in Wall Street in some companies you can say I am I'm no better off than the Philippian jailer. I live in I work for a dungate company.

I work in a dungate office. Everything in that place should be thrown out and put in a heap. The language the backbiting the backstabbing everything that goes on there.

God please get me out of this job. Lord give me a promotion. Make me the boss.

Do something. You laugh because you prayed that way. But you see the Philippian jailer was probably going to be a Philippian jailer all his life.

He's probably going to have to walk those quarters with the keys and listen to the cursing prisoners and the despairs and the woes of death and destruction all around him. But I believe that something perhaps was in this man. That's only speculation on my part.

But he was gloriously converted. And I believe that he said it is a praising man that won me to Christ. I threw a man in a jail cell.

And this man was so other than everyone around him. He and his friend Silas at midnight they began to praise and their praise opened every prison door and save the lives of many. And even my life was saved in the life of my family.

And so I make the determination. That I'm going to praise him there too. I was won by a praising man.

And by God's grace I will be a praising man in that circumstance all the days of my life. Hallelujah. God hasn't called you out of where you are.

He has called you to learn to praise him where you are. To learn to worship him. To learn to turn to him.

He's put you in a place where you don't find any fulfillment in any. You don't find it in any circumstance around you. You don't find it in anything that people are saying to you.

You're not getting any positive reinforcement. You're sick of all the backbiting. And he's put you in a place where finally you say Jesus it's got to be you or nothing.

God help me now to begin to praise you. I'm standing at the dung gate of the marketplace. But Lord you're not allowing me to move on.

You've called me to learn to praise you in this place. And by God's grace I am going to. By God's grace I'm going to learn to praise him.

Right where I am. And lastly, many who have hard life experience. And many who have hard employment experience.

And all these other difficult experiences finally come to the church. And tragically, many of those people use the church as their vehicle. Their last resort vehicle for self glory.

And I find that extremely tragic. The sense is I've not made it in the world. I've not made it in the workplace.

I've not made it in relationships. But I'm going to make it in the church. I'm going to be somebody.

But beloved let me tell you something. If you try to use the church as your vehicle for self glory. If you try to come into the church.

And this is your kind of last shot at having influence over other people's lives. Last shot to be the boss and it's going to be in church. I'm going to be in charge of something in the house of God.

If we do. We will never know the inward glory of the one who invites us to join him at the gate of no reputation. The writer of Hebrews.

Let me just read it to you. In Hebrews chapter 13. Tells us in verse 11.

For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. In other words they're taken through that gate. Where everything that is undesired is taken out of the city.

Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside or without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come.

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. That is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. We are given an invitation.

And he says yes I invite you to join me at the gate of no reputation. I invite you to come to a place of yielding all that you are for the benefit of others. I invite you to learn to praise me as I glorified my father in whatever circumstance I was found.

I invite you to yield your all for the kingdom of God. You see God may have put you where you are as a sign to those that are passing through the same places without hope. And you are a sign to them that Christ is sufficient at all times and in all places.

You're a sign. That's why God has put you there. He put you where people live.

He put you in that apartment building you live in. He put you there. In that job you have.

He put you there. The job you don't have. He put you there too.

So that down at the employment office when everyone is wringing their hands and wiping their brow. You can stand there and praise God with the confidence that you are in the palm of his hand. It's amazing.

Now Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Don't please don't turn to verse 23. He tells us that those members of the body which we think to be less honorable.

Upon these we bestow more abundant honor. Now Paul said there are members of the body. There are callings in the body which we don't esteem to be honorable.

Now I believe he's talking about men thinking from the natural perspective. We have a tendency to perhaps honor the pastors. And I think we should do that.

The Bible does say to honor your leadership. But we have a hierarchical system sometimes the same way as we do in the world. But there are members in that body Paul said that are going through dark waters.

They are encamped in difficult places. And they are to be given more abundant honor. The Holy Spirit clearly told me last night as I was praying.

That whoever I'm speaking to today I'm to honor you. I'm to honor the single mothers. Who have gone through difficult times but you've come to Christ.

You are trusting God for your children. You are trusting God for the stability to continue to walk with Him. In the face of adversity and difficult circumstances that may never change.

I'm to honor those that struggle emotionally in the house of God. You've been placed in some difficult places. But Christ is going to prove to you that He is your sufficiency.

And He's going to prove to everyone around you that He's your sufficiency as well. The Holy Spirit told me to honor those who have positions in the body that are unnoticed by anybody. And will never be noticed perhaps in this side of eternity.

Until you get to heaven. Difficult places, hard places, doing things that nobody else wants to do. Labors of love and sacrifice that nobody else is interested in.

Half the crowd is headed for the fountain gate and the beautiful gate. And you are standing at the dung gate. This is where God has put you.

But you are to be given more abundant honor. Because it takes unusual grace and strength and character to praise God where you are. You have been placed there because not everybody can praise God in those places.

Most everybody can praise God when everything is going well. Most everybody can praise God when men think you are successful. Most everybody can praise God when there are no bills to pay.

And no torments to go through in the mind. No difficulties to struggle through in the body. No fears to endure at home.

Most everybody can praise God. But only a few have that unusual grace to praise God under these circumstances. I believe with all my heart that heaven is going to stand for you.

I believe that. I don't even have to prove it. I know it in my spirit.

Heaven will stand for you. I will hold the door for you in heaven. I know it in my spirit.

I know it inside. Jesus said, There's nobody that's left lands or houses or brothers or sisters or mothers or fathers, for my sake, that will not inherit in this life and in the life to come. But he said in verse 30, Matthew 19, 30, But many which are first shall be last, and last shall be first.

Christ said, I don't see things the way man sees them. You see, I understand some things that other people don't. The word for first in the original text means dignity.

Many will be given dignity that have not been given it down here. I believe that heaven is going to stand for all who've had to undergo being assigned to difficult places in this life. But you have stayed true to God.

You've allowed him to become your all. It's the Annas. It's the Philippian jailers of this life.

It's the people who said, God, you're going to become my strength. I'm walking through hell, and I don't know anybody that's got to walk through what I've got to go through. But I know somebody that went through before me and made a way for me.

Jesus, I'm going to lay hold of the hem of your garment. And I'm not going to be swallowed by this flood. I'm not going to be burnt by this fire.

I'm not going to be dragged down by this conversation. I'm going to worship you here. And my children are going to see that you are my all sufficiency.

God, you're going to establish a testimony in my life that even in the midst of the fire, I'm going to raise up my voice and I'm going to praise you. I'm going to praise you because I'm satisfied that you are my God. Psalm 148 verse 14 tells us that God Almighty will exalt the horn or he will lift up the people that are near to him.

He promises, I will raise you up. You may have no glory on this side of eternity, but there's another day coming. There's another day coming when the last are going to be first and the first are going to be last.

Nehemiah instructed the people who had praised along the wall and at each subsequent gate to gather after their journey at the temple where they were all going to praise God. Now, the Bible speaks of many gathering one day to sing praises in heaven. Revelation chapter 7, if you go there with me, our last scripture, speaks of another group of people.

A particular group. Now, there are applications in this scripture to people who are here today. One particular group of people.

Revelation chapter 7. The Bible defines these people as having been from all nations. Revelation 7, 9, John says, after this I beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number. Of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.

The Bible tells us that these people had suffered. Verses 13 and 14. And one of the elders answered saying to me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence come they? Or where do they come from? And I said unto him, sir, thou knowest.

And he said to me, these are they which come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Now, these are people who had suffered. They had come through great trial.

And some of it was known and some of it was not known. But I tell you, God had a record. And he understands everything that every one of us has to go through.

Verses 16 and 17 tells us that they had hungered. They had known hunger. They had known what it's like to go without.

They had thirsted. That the sun had beat down on them and they had been under heat as it was oppression. They had known what it was like to bear the heat of the day.

They had known what it's like to perhaps bear scorn, difficulty in trial, no matter what place they had been placed in by the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 tells us that they were no stranger to tears. It's not wrong to cry.

There are some times when there's nothing to do but cry. But even with tears, they didn't lose their hope in God. There are some circumstances that are so difficult and so hard that we find ourselves breaking down and weeping.

But they had a song. And verse 10 says, They cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb. The word for salvation in the Greek is soteria, and it means deliverance, preservation and blessing.

This was their song. Jesus Christ, Son of God, in the midst of our tears and hunger and thirst and sorrow and bearing the heat of the day, You were our Deliverer. You preserved us from all the attacks and weapons of the enemy.

We were not triumphed over by the power of hell. And You blessed us with an inward knowledge of Jesus Christ. You blessed us with an understanding that those who never struggle fail to ever lay hold of or rarely lay hold of.

You blessed us in our trial, O God, with an understanding of who You are. You lifted us up and carried us close to Your bosom. You became our comfort.

You became our solace. You became our joy and our hope for tomorrow. You answered our prayers.

You brought our children home. You brought peace into our homes. You provided for us.

Yes, we hungered, but we never starved. We thirsted, but we always were given drink when we needed it. The sun beat down on us, but it did not burn us.

It did not scorch us. Because You were our Deliverer. And You preserved our lives.

Hallelujah. Verse 15. Here's the position now of these believers.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. And they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them to living fountains of waters. The fountain gate, finally. Hallelujah.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Thank You, Jesus. Mighty God, thank You.

God, thank You. God, thank You. Hallelujah.

I am going to worship Him. Was there cry? No matter what gate I'm sent to, I'm going to worship Him. I'm going to praise Him for the privilege.

If I'm hungry, I'm going to praise Him because there's a reason. If I'm thirsty, I'm going to praise Him because there's a reason. If I'm going through the flood or fire, I'm going to praise Him because there's a reason.

God, You're going to show through my life and give hope to everyone around me in the same place, going through the same things, that there is a Savior who does sit at the right hand of all power and all glory and everything that mankind ever has hoped for is all found in Him. There needs to be a song with this message today, I think, for those that have heard it. First of all, if you're overwhelmed, won't you let God comfort you? He is the God of all comfort.

Paul said, we were able to comfort others by the comfort which we ourselves had received from God. He won't necessarily take you out of your circumstance, but He will comfort you in it. You can go back into that office or wherever it is on Monday morning with a joy and a comfort.

Let the liars lie, let the thieves steal, let everyone do what they do. But there will be an evidence of God in your life, an evidence of strength that will cause even the most ungodly to have to stand and take notice, if you've been complaining about your lot in life. The Bible says clearly that in one of the Psalms that there's a blessing of God on the people who have no complaining in their streets.

I personally believe that before Christ comes, that everyone who can here will be given an opportunity to praise Him. This was the last judicial act as it is before Christ came to the temple. Do you know that? They praised Him all around the wall, even at the dung gate, they praised Him.

There needs to be a song of praise on our lips and it needs to start today because there is a possibility things are going to get harder before they get easier. And the song needs to be, Oh God, thank you for where I am. Thank you for where you've placed me.

Thank you that you've called me to walk with Christ who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a man and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And wherefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every other name. Thank you Lord that you've called me to walk in your footsteps, even in the church.

Lord God, if I have desired reputation, forgive me. Get this thing out of my heart and out of my life. If I've wanted to be esteemed as holy, if I've wanted influence over men and women just simply to satisfy some inward craving for recognition, forgive me of this ignorance.

If I've begun to gravitate to Corinthian type gospels that cater to this, forgive me. God help me to praise you right where I am. Help me to find you where you've put me.

Help me to sing songs of Zion, pushing my broom, opening my door, cleaning the toilet. Whatever it is that I do, help me to praise you there. Help me to glorify you there.

Help me to give you thanks and honor. Oh Jesus, help me to praise you that all the days of my life may I praise you. Help me not to bemoan my loss, earlier losses, things that are gone.

What's gone is gone. Lord, you promised now that you'd be my all-sufficiency. You'd be my husband or wife or whatever the situation is.

You'd be that for me, Lord. God, you would fill me where I am and I could praise you now in my loneliness. I could praise you, God, in my situation.

I could praise you in spite of what's gone on. You've put me here, oh God, as a sign to all those around in society that there is a strength that cannot be found by the hand of man. It doesn't come from circumstance.

It comes from the God who created this universe. The Lord is going to gather you one day to himself. And I tell you, those that have suffered the most, you're going to be among the closest to him at the throne forever because you made a sacrifice of praise that few have ever had to make.

You praised him where many today couldn't and where some wouldn't. But you made a choice and you glorified him in the fire. Hallelujah.

I pray today, Jesus, that you give us understanding of this word. God, help us to embrace this. Help us to understand it.

Oh, God, I thank you for the hard times that you've taken me through. Now I pray that you would comfort those who need to be comforted today. Release those who need to be forgiven.

Bring great deliverance into this house. I lift up, God, today the single mothers, those that are wounded. The enemy has tried to destroy them by telling them you're nothing, you'll never be anything.

I lift up those that have jobs that they'd rather not have, have to go to places they'd rather not go. God, you're telling us that you will empower us to praise you there. We will be a blessing to you there.

And I ask, oh, God, that you would impart great grace today, great grace on this entire church body, that we can truly be a testimony to you everywhere we go. If the Holy Spirit is drawing you and you just need your song back, you've so lost the ability to thank God where you are. Or if you're simply just overwhelmed, your enemies are getting the advantage over you.

I want you to come, and the Lord is going to comfort you today. Let's stand. It feels good, doesn't it, when you make the choice to glorify him in the midst of your struggle and not blame him any longer, not complain, but say, Jesus, I will glorify you.

Right where I am. And Father, I'm asking you now to seal the work that you've begun. Lord, you said you would comfort at this altar this morning, and you would set free from the voice of the condemner and God's pursuits that don't satisfy.

Lord, you would send from this altar back into this city and other places people who have a song of praise even in the worst of places. God, I thank you. God, I thank you that sorrow may come for a season, but joy comes in the morning.

God, I thank you. I thank you, Lord, that we have no continuing city here, and we seek another one to come. And one day you're going to gather all at this altar before your throne, and day and night they will serve you forever.

And they will sing, Savior, you kept us, you blessed us. You are our all-sufficiency, our provider and our deliverer. God, they will sing that song for eternity, and you will keep them close to you because they chose to worship you in difficult places here on this side of eternity.

Now, God, I thank you. Now, for the rest of the church this morning, I want to ask you to honor those that are at this altar. The Bible says we're to honor those that are going through these times and those who may be the least esteemed.

I want you just to put your hands together and honor them. We honor you. We honor you.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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