

The Reproach of Christ

by Carter Conlon

Christians are called to live an extraordinary life, bearing the reproach of Christ and overcoming the old nature through the power of the Spirit.

Duration: 54:54

Scripture: 2 Samuel 9:7, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:1-4, Hebrews 13:12, Hebrews 13:14-15

Topics: "Reproach"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the transformation that occurs when believers focus on God and His word. He highlights examples of former murderers becoming compassionate, thieves becoming honest, and fearful individuals boldly proclaiming the gospel. The preacher then references Acts chapter 5, where the apostles are imprisoned for their testimony but are miraculously freed by an angel. He encourages believers to step out into the marketplace and live for God wholeheartedly, standing up for truth. The preacher challenges the audience to choose God wholeheartedly and not be divided in their devotion. He urges them to go outside the religious norms and bear the reproach of following Christ. The sermon concludes with a reminder of Jesus being taken outside the gates of Jerusalem, emphasizing the sacrifice and reproach He endured.

Transcript

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And you might want to put a marker in 2 Samuel in the Old Testament too, as well. 2 Samuel chapter 9 is where we're going to begin there. Save you the time of finding it later on.

Hebrews chapter 13, 2 Samuel chapter 9. I'm going to be speaking on the reproach of Christ. Now, Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart. I know I have your word.

You've spoken to me. I see this in my spirit that what you are speaking and where you are guiding your people. I pray for the grace to preach it, to speak it in a way that it can be clearly understood.

I ask, O God, that you give me the ability to live this as well. Lord, let the truth that's about to be expounded on be loved. God, give me the ability and take me far beyond any natural ability that I might have to reason this or to speak it.

Take me into the life of the Holy Spirit. God, I thank you with all my heart. Your kingdom will come and your will be done in Jesus' name.

Hebrews chapter 13, the reproach of Christ, beginning at verse 12. Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore 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.

I want to start by just making a statement today that I believe that Acts chapter 2 is the pattern of the New Testament church. I believe it with all my heart. Now, men may try to make the testimony of Christ into something other than what God intended it to be, and that, of course, is the dilemma when the human reasoning gets involved with the work of God.

But in Acts chapter 2, we see 120 people coming out of an upper room, a place of fear, a place where they're very well aware of the bloodlust of the masses who have freshly, as it is, crucified the Son of God. Christianity is mocked, it's not popular. But in this particular room, the Holy Spirit came to a group of people who were willing to bear the reproach of Christ.

Christ was a reproach at that particular time and in that society. But a group of people in an upper room, and I do believe that this had to happen to them before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be given to them. We have today many, many people who go to many places, and they are baptized with something that they believe is the Holy Spirit.

But there's no desire at all in them to ever share in the reproach of Christ. Their testimony is largely ineffective, and in many cases, it's not only ineffective, it's detrimental to the cause of Jesus Christ. But out of this room came 120 God-gripped people, and they stepped out of obscurity and into the marketplace.

They were people of faith and vision who had been made to shine as lights in the darkened world. And the Scripture tells us in the original Greek that they were speaking in known languages to the people who had gathered from around the world at this particular time in this location. And they were speaking the Megalios of God, which means the anticipated outworkings of the inward life of Christ that had now been given to them.

They were standing and making declarations, as it is, in known tongues that God had come to them, that Christ who created the universe was now living inside of them, that all things had now become possible. And I do believe that the Holy Spirit had without doubt infused promises into the minds of many of these men and women who stood out in this marketplace and began making an open declaration. Their testimony was one that was not a shame-filled testimony.

They were willing to embrace the reproach of Christ, and God came and walked with them and honored them. I also believe that Luke chapter 4 and verse 18 is the believer's inheritance. I believe it with all my heart, not just because I see it theologically, but I have lived it, and I continue to live it as a Christian person, not just as a preacher of the gospel.

Where Jesus stood and said, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because I've been sent to heal the brokenhearted, to give sight to those that are blind. That speaks to me of a spiritual blindness. Those who really don't have the vision that Paul had when he said, Oh, to the Ephesian church, that you might see the exceeding greatness of his glory, who sits at the right hand of all authority and all power, to set the captives free and to heal those that have been bruised.

I believe this is the inheritance of the church. We're not supposed to be a people who are ordinary. We're to be extraordinary.

By the promises of God, Peter says, we are made into partakers of the divine nature of God, which is freely given to us through Jesus Christ. We are to be a people who are wondered at. We're to be people who are outside the kingdom of God, should be looking at you and looking at me and wondering, as they did in the early church when the religious around looked at Peter and John and wondered, understanding that these were ignorant and unlearned men, but they spoke with such incredible reasoning power.

And there seemed to be something coming from their lives that religion never could produce. And they only took note. All they could say is these people have been with Jesus.

That was the only thing they could say about them. Now, the question arises, why does so many Christian people live so far beneath their inheritance in our generation? I'm not saying this is the way it is all over the world. There are people living in victory in America, Canada, everywhere else.

But why does so many live so far beneath this inheritance? Why are so many not standing in the marketplace? And fellow workers, as it is, taking notice that something supernatural is going on in their lives. Why are so many joining churches where pastors boast that, well, we are a chronic care hospital for the sick? I don't see that in the Scriptures. I don't see that to be the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Oh, sick people come in, but sick people don't stay there. I see the miraculous happening. I see prison doors opening.

I see wounded hearts being healed. I see in the New Testament pattern people being given this incredible vision of Jesus Christ. And as they move towards it, to Him, as it is, they are changed into the very thing that they're looking at.

From image to image and glory to glory. I see former murderers now filled with compassion. Thieves being honest and working hard with their hands.

I see fearful people standing with an incredibly bold declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in their lips and emanating from their hearts. But today we see a body of believers that is largely gripped, in many cases, by the fear of man. Gripped with a deep sense of inadequacy or self-loathing.

So we now have to have courses on self-esteem and how to feel better about yourself and such like things. I see people who are struggling with sin and they never seem to overcome it. Year after year after year after year coming in the house of God.

Testimony in the marketplace is not even an option. They're just struggling to get free from sin. How is this possible when Romans 6.14 tells us that sin has no more dominion over us? When the believer, the true believer in Jesus Christ, sin has no more dominion in your life.

It doesn't mean we don't struggle. It doesn't mean the devil won't come and tempt. But it does mean that the power of sin is broken.

By this indwelling, first by the blood of Christ and secondarily by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of sin is broken. So the question is, why are so many people in the professing church of Jesus Christ still under the dominion of sin? Now in order to understand this, I want to take you back to an Old Testament story. It will help, I think, bring it to light.

In 2 Samuel chapter 9. And in 2 Samuel 9, we're going to begin at verse 6. And I'm going to speak about the people in this story as types. Now, Mephibosheth was the son of Saul. Now, Saul was a fleshly, perishing kingdom.

And before you came to Christ and I came to Christ, I don't care who your father was. If your father was not a Christian, you're coming from a fleshly, perishing place. Each one of us, as it is with our Adamic nature, have need of a savior.

We have need of covering. We have need of strength. David is the type of Christ.

He's in the lineage of Christ. The physical lineage. And Jesus himself is called the son of David.

Now, follow me with this. In 2 Samuel 9, beginning at verse 6. Now, when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come to David. Now, think about the time you came to Christ.

He fell on his face and did reverence. Remember the day that you first understood that Jesus was a savior and you were a sinner. And you needed God.

And whether you did it physically or whether you did it in your heart, you truly did fall on your face before God. I know I did. And if you've had a genuine conversion, there's something in you that you bowed, in other words.

You bent your knee. Your pride was broken. You confessed with your tongue that you were a sinner and you needed a savior.

Now, if you've never done this, it's very doubtful that you've ever had a genuine conversion. And he did reverence. He began to worship.

And David said, or in this case it's not worship, but I'm speaking of it as a type of a sinner in Christ. And David said, Mephibosheth, and he answered, behold thy servant. Remember the first time God began to call you.

He began to call your name. He began to speak to you about places he wanted to take you and impossible things that he wanted to do through your life. Do you remember these times? And perhaps some of you are living there right now where the Lord is calling you.

And he's speaking to you of things that only you know. Because only the Holy Spirit can reveal to you the things that God has chosen for you. And the pathway that God is taking you on.

And you had this inner knowledge and many of you still have it here in your heart this morning. And David said to him in verse 7, fear not. I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan, your father's sake.

I'll restore to you all the land of Saul, your father, and you'll eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself and said, what is thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am? Remember the awe and the wonder? I remember it when I came to Christ. Oh God, I was filled with wonder.

How could it be that you loved me? How could it be that you would go to a cross for me? And that there's a passionate love in your heart for me with all that I've done against you. And how I've so unrighteously spoken your name so many times. But yet still your love has been the one constant thing that has been before me and guiding me and leading me to where I am today.

And Mephibosheth is invited to the king's table. Mephibosheth is lame on his feet, the scripture tells us. And lame people were not allowed at the king's table.

This is an absolute type of Christ. Remember in the Old Testament, a lamb that had any blemish could not be brought in and used as a sacrifice. And it was a common thing as it is, even under Old Testament kings, that people who had some kind of a blemish were not allowed into the court of the king.

And yet here's this man who's lame on his feet, sitting at the table, eating bread with the king as it is. Just like you and I are today. The tablecloth covering his lameness.

And in our case, the blood of Christ covering our faults and our failures and our struggles. Fully accepted as one of the sons of the king. Thanks be to God.

And then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, I've given to thy master's son all that pertains to Saul and to all his house. Now, God is a God who restores everything that's been lost. From the time of Adam, everything you've lost, everything the devil's tried to take out of your life, everything he's tried to plant in there, the Lord says, no, I'm going to take all that away and I'm going to restore it to you through Christ and through your new position in Christ.

Everything that the enemy tried to take away from you, I'm going to give it back. God is a restorer. And you see, that's part of the miracle.

That's the Megalios of God. That's what gripped these 120 people. This awareness.

Oh God, you're going to set me free from this. Lord, where I'm weak, I'm going to become strong. Where I can't go, I'm going to go.

What I can't say, I'm going to speak. What I don't know, you're going to reveal to me. Oh God, what a wondrous thing to be brought into such a kingdom.

They couldn't contain it anymore. They just simply came out of this upper room of fear, walked into the public marketplace, sharing the reproach of Christ. And who cares what anybody thinks? God has come into my life and God is guiding me.

I'm not ashamed of his testimony. I'm not ashamed of what he's doing within me. Now, the king called Ziba, the servant of Saul.

Now, it's interesting because as we go on throughout this message this morning, you begin to realize Ziba was a corrupt man. Now, Ziba was a liar. Ziba wanted the inheritance that the king was giving to Mephibosheth.

And it's a type of... Believers have a dual nature, whether you know it or not. You have the Spirit of God within you who subdues an older nature. And the old nature wants the inheritance.

He wants the inheritance without submission. He wants the inheritance without any hardship. The old nature wants everything that God has.

It's like the young son in the parable of the prodigal son who just said, Give me everything that is mine that I may go out and spend it on foolish living, self-consumption with my friends. And the king called to Ziba, verse 9, and he said, I've given to thy master's son all that pertains to Saul and to all his house. Thou, therefore, and thy sons and thy servants shall till the land for him.

Now shall bring in the fruits that thy master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants.

So technically speaking, Ziba is more powerful than Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth is lame. And there's no mention that, at least at this point, that there's very few, if any, that are actually associated or affiliated with him.

But Ziba, this servant at his house, has 15 sons and 20 servants. This is a man who has some influence, as it is, or a minimal amount of authority. So what keeps him now from overthrowing Mephibosheth? Then in verse 11 says, Then said Ziba to the king, According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servants, so shall thy servant do.

And this is the point. You see, Mephibosheth is invited, received. He's covered.

He's fed at the king's table. Now, even though there's a corruptible man, and we know this, in his house, this man is kept in obeisance and made to be a servant by the word of the king. It's an amazing thing when you begin to put a marker there.

Go with me to Romans chapter 7. Let me explain this a little better if I can. Paul the apostle talks about this same principle in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter 7 and in verse 15, it talks about this inner struggle that goes on in every life.

He says, For that which I do, I allow not. For what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that do I. Now, some people never get beyond.

That's their testimony. If we had a testimony meeting this morning, quite a large number of people would say, Well, here's my story. You just read my testimony.

The things I don't want to do, I do. Things I do, I don't want to do. Things I love, I found myself powerless to accomplish.

The things I hate, I find myself doing. He says, Then if I do that which I would not, verse 16, I consent to the law that is good. Now, then it's no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Now, Paul's saying there's a power of corruption within the life of a person that's not yet brought into a place where it's subdued by this new life and new nature in God. I know that in me that is in my flesh dwells no good thing. For the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.

How many here today made New Year's resolutions over the years? Oh, I'm going to be more generous. I'm going to be kind. I'm going, even as Christians in some cases, I'm going to forgive everybody.

And you made this resolution with, oh, you were so sincere. Until, on the way home, the taxi driver took a longer route than he should have to run up the meter. And all of a sudden the kindness is gone, and all this new patience that you were going to have is out the window, and it's hopeless without the Spirit of God.

The good that I do not, verse 19, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Verse 20, it says, Now, if I do that I would not, it's no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, to bring me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Then, thankfully, Paul doesn't leave it there, but he says, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I thank God that I have a word that God has spoken over this corruptible man, and the authority of the king has come into this house, and one stronger than the one that used to govern this life has come in, and he keeps this wicked man in abeyance by the word of God and by the Spirit of God.

I am no longer under the dominion of a carnal nature. I have a new nature now, living inside of me because of Jesus Christ. Therefore, chapter 8, verse 1, there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Verse 11, but if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Thanks be to God.

This man, Ziba, in 2 Samuel chapter 9, although he was a wicked man, and time will prove that, he was kept in abeyance by the word of God. He was kept in abeyance because Mephibosheth was at the king's table. Now, you've got to follow the trend of thought that the Holy Spirit is leading me on, or you're going to miss the point.

He's at the king's table. The king has given commandment. Christ has given commandment that you're not under the dominion of sin.

The old nature can't govern your life anymore. He might be more powerful than you are, but there's one in you that's greater than He who is in the world. There's one in you that the word of God keeps in abeyance.

And I'm emphasizing the point because otherwise you won't understand where this message is going to go. In 2 Samuel chapter 15, back in the Old Testament, David the king is forced to flee Jerusalem. And we see it.

He's weeping and he's humbled. In chapter 15 and verse 30, it says, David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and he wept as he went up and had his head covered, and he went barefoot, and all the

people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went. Now, he is reviled.

Chapter 16 tells us that there was a man on a hillside called Shimei who was cursing him and throwing stones at him. Very much a Christ type. Now, David was aware that he carried upon himself the judgment for his own sin.

David had sinned against God. And because of this sin, he was forced to go outside of the gate as it is, outside of the city of Jerusalem, across the valley Kidron, weeping, being reviled, and the weight of sin upon him. Now, in the very, very same way, in our opening text in Hebrews, it tells us that Jesus, now not for his sins, but for our sins, he suffered without the gate.

Jesus had to go outside of the gate. He went outside of the established religious norm as it is of the day. He went outside of the place where everyone is using religion for their own glory and their own gain.

He went outside of spiritual ignorance and selfishness, and everything else that comes when people do not fully possess the heart of God. He went out with sorrow in his heart, very much in a similar way that David did. Now, with David were those who were loyal to him.

Many loved him, and they knew that even though his reign seemed out of season, he was still the anointed king. And folks, I want to tell you something. There are seasons.

Paul says, preach the gospel in season and out of season. There are seasons in societies where it's even fashionable to be a Christian. And then there are times when it is out of season.

And we are rapidly now moving into an out of season time to live as a Christian. Now, most of you who work in the marketplace, you know what I'm talking about. The violence, the scorn now, the stone throwing, the heaping of insults, the impressions laid on you that you're some kind of an imbecile, because you believe that there is a savior, there's a heaven, a hell.

You believe that society as we know it is coming to an end, and they cast all kinds of insults on you. And in 2 Samuel chapter 19, there's a story here that has always perplexed me. I never could really figure it out.

Now, it's when Absalom or this rebellion was finally overthrown, and David comes back in to Jerusalem again. Now, it speaks of two things to me. Number one, Jesus is coming back soon.

We can expect His return any day now. He's coming back. There's going to be some very difficult times that you and I are going to have to go through, folks.

We're all going to have to go through it. It's not going to be easy apart from the fact that Jesus Christ has promised to carry and sustain those who belong to Him. Very, very difficult days are quickly coming our way.

Christ is coming back, but He comes back repeatedly to those that are His. He's coming back to you again. There are people here in this sanctuary that God's been trying to speak to you about some things, about your relationship with Him.

And He keeps coming back to you time and time again. He comes back and tries to speak. And this time, He comes back and Mephibosheth comes out to meet Him.

And when Mephibosheth comes out to meet Him, at the end of the encounter that David has with Him, he says something very curious to him. Now, Ziba had lied. Most commentators agree Ziba had lied.

When David was going outside of the gate, Ziba came and made it appear as if he lied about Mephibosheth. I'm not going to go into the whole story. And when they came back, David said to Mephibosheth, you and Ziba divide the inheritance.

And I often thought, was David just tired? Was this a misjudgment on his part? Now, why would David, as a Christ type, tell Mephibosheth, who I'm speaking about as a type of a believer who was once covered at the table, divide the inheritance with this, you go home and work it out with this corrupt man in your house. Divide it yourself. Figure out which part is yours and which part is his.

And it's an incredible interaction when you see it as a type of Christ and a believer. Now, verse 24 in chapter 19 says, Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, now here's why I believe this happened, came down to meet the king. He neither dressed his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

And it came to pass when he's come to Jerusalem, verse 25, to meet the king, the king said unto him, Wherefore, when is not thou with me, Mephibosheth? Mephibosheth, why didn't you go with me? I had to go outside of the gate. I was in a place that's not popular in society. I was in a place that only those who love me can go.

Mephibosheth, I was kind to you. I covered you. I brought you to my table.

I commanded this corrupt servant that I knew was corrupt in your house to be an abeyance to me. I took authority. I gave you authority over this servant who was more powerful than you.

And now when the season came that you were called to go with me outside of the gate and into a place of weeping and misunderstanding, you stayed at home. Mephibosheth, why didn't you come with me? And Mephibosheth says, well, you know, I didn't dress my feet. I didn't trim my beard or wash my clothes.

And I began to think about this. Now, he is in a kingdom that's in complete rebellion now. And to be in this place with the son of the king as it is rebelling against him, it could have cost him his life.

How did he survive? What would he say if David's rebellious son came and said, Mephibosheth, why haven't you dressed your feet or trimmed your beard or washed your clothes? Now, this is the type of a man who positions himself directly between two kingdoms. I want you to hear me on this. You see, if the son of David who's in rebellion comes, he could very well say, well, listen, I'm not trimming my beard.

I'm not changing my shoes. I'm not washing my clothes until you are established in your kingdom. And then when David returns, he said, well, I didn't trim my beard.

I didn't wash my clothes. I didn't change my shoes until you have come back and retaken the kingdom. And he's a man who's right in the middle.

He's positioned himself for the best of both worlds. That's why much of the church in Western society is powerless. That's why there's so little victory.

That's why people sit in houses and have to, week after week and year after year, have to nurse and nurture old wounds. They live behind prison bars. They don't get free.

And sin has dominion because they are positioned directly between two kingdoms. Coming to the house of God with this seeming devotion to the Lord, but having the same devotion to the things of this world outside of the house of God. That's why there's such a powerless testimony in America today.

That's why the church is a non-issue in this society. That's why voices of men and women of God are not heard anymore. Because they've positioned themselves between two kingdoms.

Yes, I want to go to heaven, but I want everything that religion in the world has to offer me as well. I want the two sides of the coin at the same time. But, folks, it's not optional.

That's why Jesus says to Mephibosheth, It's David, but it's the type of Christ in him. I can see David staring at Mephibosheth. His countenance is not changing because he knows the truth.

Mephibosheth starts to make excuses. Well, my servant lied. And, of course, you know your servant is lame.

Can you imagine when Christ comes back and He looks at you and says, Why didn't you go with me? Well, you know my father wounded me. Well, you know my past and my background. You know how hard it is to get up and do anything.

You know how hard it is to, Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth? I believe that's going to be the cry of God's heart when He returns to so many of His people. Why didn't you go with me? Why didn't you come outside the city wall? Why weren't you willing to share the reproach of a world that hates God and will hate those who truly represent Him? There's no way around it, folks. And so David says to Mephibosheth, You and Ziba go home and divide the inheritance.

And it speaks to me of the person who never gets the victory. He's always fighting inside his own heart, inside his own mind, inside his own house, inside his own head. He never, ever has the courage to come again into the marketplace and stand with a living testimony of the power of God in his life.

I'd rather die than live that kind of a Christianity. Elijah said to the people in 1 Kings 18.21, How long will you halt between two opinions if the Lord be God, follow Him? How long, how long, how long will you stay in this place of playing both sides of the fence? How many people, even sitting here today, are playing both sides of the fence, claiming to love God, coming in with this display of devotion, but yet you go home and you've got the same devotion to pornography, the same devotion to stupid television and talk radio, the same devotion to things that offend the very nature and character of God. Hebrews 13.13 says, Let us go therefore unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.

Let us go. If we're going to be a church that has a testimony in our generation, we have to go outside of the camp, outside of all this religion that lives for itself and uses God for its own gain, seeks reputation, seeks power over men's lives, seeks all of these things that they think Christ is supposed to be giving them. Go outside bearing the reproach.

Now think of Jesus for a moment. As He's taken outside the gates of Jerusalem, the whole religious system of carnality has now sunned Him and is about to nail Him to a cross. He goes outside bearing the reproach of servanthood.

Folks, in a world that seeks to dominate other's servanthood is a reproach in our generation. So many are using God to dominate other people's lives now, instead of serving. He was the greatest among us.

He's the greatest there ever will have been among us. Yet the Scripture says He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant. He Himself said, The greatest among you shall be your servant.

The reproach of silence and suffering wrong when everyone is screaming about rights and vengeance, when a whole society now is gathering around ethnicity and warring and fighting, just as Jesus said it would be in Matthew 24. There are a people who will learn to go outside of all of this and suffer the reproach of silence and suffering wrong. The reproach of giving when so many are on the take now in our generation.

Of giving as just simply giving themselves. Of the reproach of biblical honesty in a time when evil is called good. We're living in a generation that is completely now inverting the law of God and making evil good and good evil.

God help us to get out of this mixture. God help us to take a stand for Christ in our generation. The reproach of surrender to the Lordship of Christ when so many are in rebellion and others are using Him only for their own gain.

It's a reproach to a self-seeking generation when they look at a person who is willing to be given for the things of God and for the well-being of others. The reproach of being there for the betterment of others when so few really care that you are even there. Think of the Son of God for a moment.

How many were actually there as God Himself in the flesh is giving Himself for this generation and so few at that time really care that He's even there. But thanks be to God that He was. And in every generation there has to be somebody that is willing to stand in the marketplace alone if necessary and just say, Oh God, be glorified.

The reproaches of Thee fell upon me. People who hate God will hate you. There's no way around it.

I want to close with Acts chapter 5, please, if you will. I don't want you to think today that I'm angry. I'm not.

I am impassioned for these things. I want to see you alive spiritually in this last hour. Acts chapter 5, verse 40.

It says, And to him they agreed. And when they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. See, this is the book of Acts church. They rejoiced.

Yes, they were beaten. They were commanded not to speak. And they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Oh, folks, I've lived this. I've been in places where I've had people's fingers pointed in my face. They've threatened me.

Threatened to do me harm legally and illegally if necessary. And I remember other police officers I worked with who had such a vibrancy of Jesus Christ, caving under the pressure, not willing to suffer the reproach of Christ. I remember watching them lose their sweet words.

I saw the life, particularly about five men that I had the privilege of leading to the Lord, and to watch them draw back, to watch them do what Mephibosheth did. Out of one side of the mouth profess a devotion to God, and out the other side play the game that they felt was necessary to get ahead. I watched them cave, and I watched the life of God just literally drained out of them.

It broke my heart. You see, there's no freedom there. There's no deliverance there.

There's no power there. And you end up joining a church that caters to this captivity. And groups of people who are exactly the same gather together, and it all becomes an in-house thing.

And there's a great big display of devotion, but only in the house. Almost nothing in the marketplace. Because the root of it is that there is no willingness to suffer the reproach of Christ.

I made a choice as a young Christian, and the choice that I made is I'm going to suffer His reproach. I remember thinking this way years ago, 26 years ago. I'm going outside the camp.

I'd read it in Hebrews, and I'm going to follow Him. I'm going to be honest. I'm going to work hard.

I'm going to do what God says, but I'm not going to draw back from the testimony of Jesus Christ. And I thank God to this day that, you see, that's where freedom is. So many people are looking for freedom, and they're looking in seminars, and they're looking for somebody to lay hands on them, or cast the devil out of them.

And the reality is that they're not willing to suffer the reproach of Christ. When you move in the direction of saying, God, you have my all, then the Lord looks at you and says, and you have my all as well. That's where victory comes.

When you are willing to stand up in a crooked generation, not stubbornly, but spirit-led, spirit-empowered by the Holy Spirit, and say, God, I'm not going to be a closet Christian. I'm stepping out into the marketplace. I'm going to lift my hands.

I'm going to walk into my office on Monday morning and say, isn't God good? Let me tell you what He did in my heart in church yesterday. And if they sneer, if they scorn, just let them. I have nothing to be ashamed of.

I'm a servant of the God who created this entire world. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle said to Timothy, he said, God's not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ or of me, his prisoner. Do not be ashamed, he said, but be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. There's going to be a reproach.

Paul was everything but popular in his generation. But Paul was the man that God could put a pen in his hand and write much of our New Testament. Paul was a life that the Holy Spirit could point to even now in our generation and say, here, follow this man as he followed Christ.

Beloved, there's nothing to be gained when you're living halfway between the will of God and the things of this world. I want to challenge you, if God is God, follow Him. Don't halt between two opinions.

This society has a belly full of religious thought and idea and conferences and various other things that have no power in them. But there is a dearth of people in the marketplace who are standing up with the glory of God on them, who have this megalos of God within them, who are willing to say to their neighbors, listen, let me tell you what God's done for me, what God is doing for me, where I've come from, where I'm going, who's inside of me, what He's done in my life, let me tell you what God can do for you. Now, it's this church in Acts chapter 5, this testimony in verses 18 to 20.

Now, here's everything I wanted to say summed up. And it says, they laid their hands on the apostles and they put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Now, here's the people who are being threatened. These are people that this is an unpopular time. Now, they are in jail for their testimony of Jesus Christ, but God knows they will stand in the marketplace.

And it's to these people that the word of the Lord comes as a messenger and opens the prison doors. Folks, I want to tell you something. If you've got a captivation in your life and you need to get out, I want to challenge you.

Step out into the marketplace and start living for God. With everything that's in you, stand up for truth. Do not cower down under the spirit of this age.

And the Lord will open your prison doors. There will be nothing that can hold you, because it's of no testimony of any glory to God to have people half-captivated standing in the marketplace declaring His name. God will set you free.

There will be a word come to you like this morning that will open prison doors and set you free. That's why the author of Hebrews 13 says, Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate, let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

Folks, if you think it's all in New York, you're in for a huge disappointment very, very shortly. It's not to be found here. Your security is not here.

Thank God He gives us the ability to work and put bread in our cupboard and clothes on our back. But your security is not here. It's in Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah. Let us, therefore, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, not just in church, but continually, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. Folks, if you can get anything out of this word today, just start speaking His name everywhere you go.

Start giving thanks to God for the big things, the little things. When somebody says to you, Oh, I was almost hit by a car yesterday in the street, then just look at them and say, Oh, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ. God has spared you that you might hear about His love for you.

Do not stand and play a double game any longer. Step out and God will open your prison doors and He will give you the power to stand as a living witness in this generation. I stake my very life on these words today.

God will give you the power. Hallelujah. The greatest decision I ever made as a young Christian is to stand up for Jesus Christ.

And God came and did everything He's ever promised me He would do. He made me into what I could never be. He's taken me where I could never go.

He's given me the power to stand in places I could never stand. He put His life within me. He opened prison doors and I just simply walked out.

I've never gone to counseling for past wounds, thank God. He opened the door and I walked out and I'm never going back. God help us again to be the church of Jesus Christ.

God help us to be a church that can stand in this city, in this hour of time with our hands raised and our voices open, declaring the glorious things that God is willing to do for those that are His. God help us to put away all empty religious display that we keep just for the house of God and have a living, vibrant relationship with God every day, everywhere we go, in every building, in every supermarket, everywhere we go, that Jesus Christ is Lord. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Stand up and be the church, folks. Stand up and be the church of Jesus Christ. Stand up and be the church in this generation.

People need to see Christ in the people who know Him. They need to see Him again in our generation. By God's grace, stand up and take the reproach of Christ as a treasure that you have been entrusted with of God Almighty Himself.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Jesus said, if they speak evil of you, rejoice, rejoice, for so did their fathers of the false prophets. If you've come home at the end of the day and people all through your day have been speaking evil of you, that is evidence they see the Christ in you that they hate.

They see Him. Young people that are here, listen to me. College-age kids and everything.

There is no future in religiousness. But there is a great future ahead of you if you will give your all to Jesus Christ. If you will never say no to God.

If He calls you to Africa, go to Africa. That's where life is. That's where you will find meaning for your life.

If He calls you to do something, do it. If He asks you to obey Him, just simply do it. He'll give you the power to obey Him.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus. I want to share a song that the Lord gave me a while back about this particular passage of Scripture.

And as I sing it, I'm going to ask you to stand in a moment and give you an opportunity. Folks, I was about 26, I guess, and I attended a church service. I heard a message, and I got out of my seat.

I went to an altar. Now, you don't have to come to an altar. It's an issue of the heart, really.

But I got on my knees and I said, You have it all, Lord. You have me. As much as I'm able, I bring what I have to you.

God, use it for your glory. I'm not going to be ashamed that I am yours and that you are mine. Can you give me a key? The Lord is my shelter.

I shall not fear what man can do unto me. I have no continuing refuge here. Just Jesus and love so free.

Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God. The fruit of our lips to His name. Jesus Christ yesterday, today forever, and evermore will be.

You see, Pastor, you just spoke my life. I'm stuck between two kingdoms. Jesus and St. Mephibosheth.

I want to talk to everybody who feels captivated. Everybody who feels inferior, insecure, scared. Will you come? That's all Jesus asks you.

Will you come with me? You're going to know supernatural life there. You're going to find a carrying power and a victory that cannot be found in any amount of human reasoning or self-effort. It's the divine life of Christ.

In the annex, you can stand between the screens. In the balcony, if you'd stand in the main sanctuary, make your way. If the Holy Spirit's calling you, just come to this altar.

We're going to pray together. The altar, I fully will know because I've lived it. When you take a stand in the marketplace, there are people that have formed an image of themselves.

And they're going to say, you either bow to the image that we formed or it's going to get pretty hot for you here. But there are three Hebrew boys that refused. Scripture tells us that they worshipped.

They went into the firebound. But in the fire, somewhere along the line, their cords were loosed. There was no time for a self-help course.

There was no time for tapes. Their cords were loosed in the fire. And they began to worship.

It says they were worshipping, praising God in the place that they were thrust into. And this insane king that wanted people to bow down to his image of himself looked and saw the form much greater than anything he knew. He called it a form like the Son of God was in the fire with him.

It's such a privilege to be called into the reproach of Christ. Hallelujah. Where did we ever start thinking that it was going to be popular to be a Christian? It's not popular.

And it will become less popular as time goes on. But I'd rather be popular with God. Thank you, Jesus.

Now, Lord, I pray, God, for these that have come to this altar today. Father, I ask you, God, that joyfully, joyfully, we can take the spoiling of our goods. Lord, the praise of man, self-ambition, and everything this world has to offer, we can joyfully take the spoiling of all of this and go out the gate with our Christ, bearing his reproach with the sacrifice of praise upon our lips.

Our testimony is that there's no continuing city here. We seek one to come. Oh, God, I pray with all my heart that we be a testimony in our generation that Christ is alive.

God, forgive this country for its bankrupt religion. And I pray, God, with all my heart that once again the Christians, true followers of Christ, will step out into the marketplace and the book of Acts Church will happen all over again. Men and women unashamed and not moved by the scorning of the society around them, but standing in the power of God.

And, Lord, you promised that you'll open every prison door. You'll give sight to every blinded eye. You'll heal those that have been bruised in heart.

You will give strength to the weary. God, you'll cause our feeble hands to be lifted up. You'll put words in our mouths.

You'll put love in our hearts. We will walk in a supernatural walk with you. God, I believe this with all my heart.

I know it. I thank you for it with everything that's in me. Now, Father, help us to embrace this today.

Help us, God, to begin to rejoice. Father, I pray that in our minds we can see ourselves walking outside of the walled city of religion and all of society and rebellion to God and going where Christ is and walking with Christ and truly rejoicingly embracing the reproach of Jesus Christ. Father, I thank you for this with all my heart.

Lift your hands just for a moment with me. Say these words with me. Lord Jesus, I'm not ashamed of you.

You are my Lord. You are my Savior. You are my God.

You are my King. You created the heavens and the earth. You are coming back where you are going to reign and rule for all of eternity.

One day, every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that you are Lord. For many, it will be too late.

But for me, I make the choice today. I'm going with you, Jesus. I'm confessing your name.

By your power and by your grace, I'm not ashamed to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Now give him praise and rejoice. This is the conclusion of the message.

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