

A Theology of Martyrdom

by Dean Taylor

This sermon emphasizes the theology of martyrdom, focusing on the sacrificial love and conquering power of Jesus Christ as the slain lamb. It challenges believers to follow Jesus' teachings faithfully, even in the face of persecution and to live a life fully surrendered to God. The speaker draws parallels between historical martyrs and the need for modern-day Christians to stand firm in their faith, reminding them of the victory found in the blood of the Lamb.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1, Revelation 5:6, Matthew 10:16, Romans 8:35, 2 Corinthians 10:3, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 1:18, John 18:36

Topics: "Martyrdom", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

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Transcript

The scientists used to always just believe that the universe was forever. It was sort of their sense of eternity. It was their sense of understanding the cosmos and being usually atheists.

That's the way they saw things. And Edwin Hubble created this gigantic telescope. I don't know if you've seen pictures of it.

Gigantic telescope. And with this telescope, he was able to show some things in the stars that proved that the galaxies were expanding, that the universe was expanding, and because of this, the universe had a beginning. Well, this had a profound effect on the scientific community.

As a matter of fact, Albert Einstein was one of the leading physicists, of course, at his time, and he had in his calculations this idea of a static universe. And with the static universe and the idea that the universe always existed, it affected the way he even did all of his calculations. But when he came on to Edwin Hubble's calculations, and particularly when he looked through that telescope and saw what Hubble was explaining to him, Einstein writes that it changed his life.

He calls it literally his cosmological fudge factor of his different calculations, and it changed everything about him. As a matter of fact, from that time, Einstein never became a Christian, but he began to get into Zionism and began to just wonder, what is God? Is there a God? And began to ask some of those bigger questions. It had a profound effect on him.

I believe that the text that we're looking at today, and the text that we've been looking at during this revival conference, the Isaiah 6 and the Revelation 5, can do this to every one of us. By getting a glimpse of the center of the universe, from really seeing what's going on there, it can change everything in our life. It's changed my life, and I believe if we take it seriously, it affects everything.

The title of my message is The Theology of Martyrdom. And I'm taking this from the slain lamb that we will see in Revelation 5. I'm going to be going somewhat expositively through Revelation 4 and 5, and then looking at the different scriptures that go with this. The Theology of Martyrdom.

The Theology of Martyrdom, and looking at the slain lamb in Revelation 5. I really appreciate being here. It's a tremendous blessing to be with Sermon Index. I've seen the ministry through the different years.

I've had the opportunities in some of the early days to be with some of you, with Brother Al, Brother Greg, and Scotland, and think of some of those times. I want to say that it's a tremendous blessing for me to be here again. I feel like it's a homecoming.

I've been involved recently with working in Greece, where the Muslims are coming to Christ on Lesbos Island, and it has been a tremendous thing for my entire family to go through. To see literally hundreds of former Muslims coming to Christ, but then seeing them talk about their countries and their plight and the things that they've gone through, it changes you. When you're there and you're in those camps and those different things, hearing these testimonies and hearing these stories, it's been a hard two years, but it's been a blessing to see those things happening.

Now I live in Boston. We're at Christian College, a brand-new Christian College that I've been called to and ministering to in Boston, and this has been also a tremendous blessing in my life. One of the things that we're trying, that we feel a burden on us, a calling on us there in Boston, is the idea of discipleship.

Now, sadly, oftentimes discipleship and revival are kind of pitted against each other. You ever notice that? Either people talk about revival or they talk about discipleship. I don't think it should be this way.

I don't think it should be this way, that they should be pitted against each other, because revival brings action. And I've heard this several times in the messages that we've been hearing so far, and I've really appreciated that. You know, at the end of the Isaiah 6 passage, what did God tell Isaiah to do? I asked the question.

You remember? After he finally saw the revelation, he did what with Isaiah? He sent him. Amen. He said to go.

Amen. At the end of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 28, after all that he did on this earth, what did Jesus say to do? To go. Amen.

So I believe that revival has action in it. I believe that revival has the same thing, and it should have this practical element of it. One of the biggest callings on my life has been to focus on the teachings and the very person of Jesus Christ.

God woke me up from the army about 30 years ago, and looking at the teachings of Jesus, and this comes out of my ministry, and it comes out of a burden that I have because of this. I believe that revival is a person. I believe that our salvation is a person.

I believe that our life and our faith and our existence are in the person of Jesus Christ. And I believe that Jesus Christ has said some amazing things. I think that he has some amazing teachings, and I think they are for us today.

And I believe that revival should be talking about Jesus. He said that when I will go, I will send the Holy Spirit. And what did he say the Holy Spirit would speak of? Of him.

The testimony of him. And so I would like to do that today. We can build three tents in revival.

I love revival tents. I do. We can build three tents like the apostles did up there, where they had the appearance of Jesus and the appearance of Elijah and Moses.

But the voice from heaven, I think, still rings out today. Listen to him. Listen to him.

Revival is a person. This person has something to say. He's God.

You know, Jesus said to us, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things that I say? In Luke 6.46. Revelation 5 is my favorite verse in the Bible. I know preachers say that all the time, but really, it is. I love that passage.

It is my favorite text in the Bible, and when I was looking into coming here or not, and I heard that the message was on this view of Isaiah 6 and Revelation 5, I could not help but come. I love this passage. It's magnificent.

In its true sense of the word, it's terrible. Revelation 5. In the true sense of the word, it's awesome. Revelation 5 is the center of the universe.

Also, what Isaiah 6 shows us. Much more than Hubble could ever show us in his telescope, what we see given to us by the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Apostle John, will show us the center of the universe. And I believe, like when Einstein looked through Hubble's telescope, if we look through the Holy Spirit's telescope today, through the eyes of John, it will change everything.

So the theology of martyrdom. What do I mean by this? By saying the theology of martyrdom, I do not mean a martyrdom complex. In other words, where we're going around trying to get ourselves persecuted or trying to get ourselves in trouble or something.

That's not what I mean. Rather, I mean a life that is genuinely dead to ourselves and alive to Jesus Christ. Dead to the philosophies of this world and the politics of this world, and alive to Jesus Christ.

A life that believes in the resurrection so much and so genuinely. And I love what the brother said today. I need this too.

I want to say right now from the beginning. I preach these words of Jesus. I need them.

But a theology of martyrdom is a life so given up of your own life and you consider yourself dead, that you are having no fear in your life. You can go forward in this life and believe in Jesus. The apostle Paul says

now in Romans 6, now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

A life so committed to God that you're considered your life dead. Incredible story. The young John Wesley, unconverted John Wesley, was heading over to America to preach to the Indians.

He writes in his journal, I go to the Americas to save the Indians, he called them the Indians in those days, but who shall save me? As he's on this ship, true story, he writes it in his journal, while he's on this ship, between England and America, they run into a hurricane. And in the hurricane, the main mast of that ship was broken and it fell over and he is terrified. But he looks over and he sees a group of Moravians, missionaries, just praying and singing.

And he's astounded by this. Later on, he speaks to Bishop Spangenberg, who's like the rock of the Moravians. Zinzendorf was the fire and Bishop Spangenberg was the rock.

He goes to him and he said, can I ask you, weren't you afraid to die? And it's interesting, reading his reply, no, I wasn't afraid to die, we're ready to meet the Lord. But he said, but your children, weren't your children afraid to die? Bishop Spangenberg took the opportunity and looked at John Wesley and he said, do you know the Lord? And of course, being a good, trained minister, he said, well yes, I know that he is the savior of the world. But do you know him? And John Wesley writes in his journal, I said that I did, but I think he saw through me.

He did see through him. And then he asked him, does your spirit bear witness with God's spirit that you are a child of God? Oh, I'm hoping in my prayer today is that we look at this Revelation chapter 5, that this slain lamb who was on the throne will be so true to us. And here's the thing, I'm going to take it a little further today, because of the burden and the calling that I've had on my life to lift up the teachings of Jesus Christ.

I believe it's a burden of mine today that the church has been hijacked by the empire of this world today, by the culture of our day. Both politics, both conservative and liberal, the church has too often been prostituted, and we've prostituted out our precious message to the latest fad, the latest traveling salesman, the latest demon-tongued politician and demon-tongued preachers. But my burden this afternoon is that we will bring the focus back to the very person of Jesus Christ, and that the revival that we are looking for is in him, in him.

I want to focus on the lamb. So looking at, we're going to pick up Revelation 5, let's back up to Revelation 4 just to get this incredible context. John.

Now, John was the longest living apostle, right? And we know that we have the epistles of Paul, and we learn it more because of the different ways we have the book of Acts to tell us about it, but those churches in Revelation were probably churches that the apostle John actually, you know, founded. He was a church planter there. And while I think there's some incredibly good, important things for us eternally out of the book of Revelation, and I mean eternally, there's also some practical things that we should get out of it.

This was a pastor who received a revelation from God to these seven churches. And as he goes through the rebukes of the different churches and tells them the things that he has on his heart, you see this conflict of empire everywhere. And you do.

And you look at the ruins even today, you see it. The reference to the empires and all that they were fighting with were everywhere. Things like the Lord of Lords, the Son of God.

Caesar would use the term like I have the good news, the evangel, the good news, and he called himself the Son of God. Believing that the Augustus Caesar was actually the Son of God, and so all his predecessors, all that came after him were also sons of God was something that was common in their day. I had the opportunity a few years ago while we were over in Greece to go to Ephesus.

And as I was there, the biggest thing that kept pouring into my heart, have you lost your first love, Dean? Have you lost your first love? It's been about 30 years since I was converted. Now I'm walking in Ephesus, and I'm ringing in my ears, have you lost your first love? As I'm pondering there and just imagining in my mind what it must be like to be an early Christian in Ephesus, and I'm walking around the ruins of Ephesus, which is an incredible sight to see. There I saw in one area above the main library there, Emperor Augustus, divine Son of God.

I mean, this was something they had around them all the time. So when you see the book of Revelation, and when you see this throne, kings, powers, the language cannot be missed. To say Jesus is Lord in the early church was an empire-crushing insult.

And I think if we take it seriously, it still is. Jesus is Lord. So let's look at it.

Open your telescope up to Revelation chapter 4. It's great stuff. Great stuff. The center of the universe.

Great stuff. So Revelation chapter 4, we have, after the rebukes to the different seven churches and the warnings that we have, then finally we get this passage, and it says, And after these things I look, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things which must take place.

And he just begins to reveal more and more and more, and it's just like the Hubble's telescope. I mean, you just keep getting more. And it's incredible.

The throne set in heaven was one like set on a throne, verse 3, and he who sat there was like Jasper in Sardis Stone. There was a rainbow there. Twenty-four elders sat in clothed in whites, the crowns of gold.

And verse 6, a sea of glass was before it, and the living creature like a lion, and these different creatures and angels, and everyone coming down to verse 8, and each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within, and they did not rest day or night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. And whenever the living creatures give honor, glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worships him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created. That's the scene of heaven.

That's the center of the universe. I mean, wow, right? So we get this telescope looking at this, and so when I go to pray, I'm focusing in on this spot. I mean, wow.

So he cracks the door open, and you first get the idea you see the throne. Then he gives you a circle. The next circle are the four living creatures, the angelic hosts that are four living creatures around him.

Then the next circle is like the seven spirits, or like the high-ranking archangels. And then the next level is the twenty-four elders. And then around the ever-widening circle are the ten thousands and ten thousands and thousands.

And then finally, to every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, bring honor and glory and power forever and ever to the one seated upon the throne and on the Lamb. I really appreciate what Brother Al preached last night. He said the heartbeat of heaven.

Listen to this. I love this, brother. Blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

I love that, Brother Al. I'm going to use that. The heartbeat of heaven.

All of that. Praising God. Wow.

Now, after all that, if that's not enough, we turn to chapter five. So turn your Bibles to five. So here's the emphasis of the context of the passage that I want to give.

And I saw in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Oh, this is a very interesting passage here. It tells us something about the scroll.

Now, as we look at the scroll, we wonder about what's coming. What does it kind of look like? We read on. We get some ideas.

And we know that in those days, the scrolls were opened up. Sometimes they'd be 15, sometimes 20 feet long. And this is what it was like.

And there was some kind of a scroll, and it had seven seals around it. Well, what was it? It was written on the inside and written on the out. We get some clues.

In Daniel chapter 12, it says, verse 8, and I heard. I think we can get a clue from Daniel. And I heard, but I did not understand.

And I said, Oh, my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? This is Daniel's revelation. And he said, Go, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the end time. Many shall be purified and made white and tested, but the wicked shall do wickedly.

Listen to this interesting point. And not one of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. Is there a clue in that? We don't know for sure.

It's interesting this, the wicked shall not understand. You know, in John 3, the passage, the very famous salvation passage, when Nicodemus is asking him, Can you explain this stuff to me? It's interesting, and don't miss this, the point of our salvation. Jesus answered and said unto him, Most assuredly I say unto you, Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Daniel says the wicked shall not understand. That these things are spiritually discerned. That you must be born again or you're not going to see it.

You won't see this kingdom. You won't understand it. You won't get it.

He goes on to say in John 3, Unless you are born again, you will not enter the kingdom. It must be born of God. Another clue we get about what's in these scrolls is in Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel, it literally says, in Ezekiel's prophecy, that there was a scroll written on the inside and on the out. And those were woes and judgments. And we get this in what's following in these seven seals as they're broken.

It's a plan for the end. A will. I did some research and I found out that the wills in those days would be wrapped in different seals and the witness had to be there.

So if I gave my brother the seal of my brother, this could not be broken unless he was present. There's actually historical records of Augustus and they call it a will under seals. And it had to be opened in this way.

It's interesting. Could this be something? I don't know. But what we do know is that what follows is terrible, wonderful, amazing, and awesome.

We hear the plan for salvation of all the rest of the world. We hear the curses and the wars. As the first seal is broken, we see war coming.

And the second, the removing of peace. And the third, economic disaster followed by death and hunger. The revealing of the martyrs in the fifth seal.

And the wrath of God in the sixth. And the prayers of the saints in the seventh. And all this, the releasing of the Antichrist and the church through all this.

And then finally you get to the end. All of that. And this is where it's all going.

Don't you miss it. At the end of the seventh trumpet, of the very last seal, it says this. Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever.

That's the end. Finally, this is from the rising of the sun to its going down. The Lord's name will be praised.

Until then, we're in an ambassadorship. We're like little embassies. Have you ever been to an embassy in a different country? You go to an embassy.

The local church should be the embassy in a different country. You go into the embassy when you're in Greece or you're in Saudi Arabia or I don't know if they have an American embassy in Saudi Arabia but in Europe or somewhere. When you go in there, it's like being in that little country.

The local church should be showing the whole world what the whole world should look like if they followed the king. This is what the church is to look like. We're not living it.

We don't have the totality yet. It will come though. And in the end day, they should be able to say, ah, so that's what those guys were talking about.

Because one day, we're part of the winning team. We're part of that which will be. From the rising of the sun.

All right, now. And I saw, verse 1, And I saw in his right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals? Now we just talked about those seals just a little bit.

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it. So I wept much because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or even to look at it. I don't know

how they got the glance, the idea that, you know, they had the, he got at least a little look that was, saw it was written on the inside and the out.

But now they don't even want to look at it after they cried that cry. Are you worthy to open it? Imagine being there. Let's take it out of the, just the imaginary, but really be there with John.

And he's singing, and he said, and no one was even wanting to look at it. He said, so I wept much. It's a strange passage.

He just starts crying. Again. He starts breaking down and crying because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or even to look at it.

All that power, the ability, the judgment that was in those scrolls. I don't want to touch that. I'm so glad I don't.

The judgment that's in it. I don't want that. So I wept much because no one was found worthy to open and to read it or to look at it.

But here's my favorite verse in the Bible. But one of the elders said to me, do not weep. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.

This is so powerful. Think of the power, the might, and the strength. And now I know we know what's going next.

You even heard it preached last night. But I want you for a minute to just imagine John is there crying. And the angel just said, the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed.

Take a look. And you know, just in your mind, imagine what John must have been thinking, right? He's going to look back and he's going to see this huge lion. He looks back in verse 6. And I looked.

This is the center of the universe. Pay close attention. And I looked.

And behold, in the midst of the throne of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb. Stood a lamb. Not fallen lamb.

Stood a lamb as though it had been slain. Having seven horns, which represents total power, and seven eyes, which represents seeing all things, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth, that he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on a throne. Yes, the ultimate seat of power.

The ultimate victory over judgment. The ultimate victory over everything is standing there, a slain lamb. And I believe, church, that this example of suffering love, this example of the conquering power of suffering love, is much more than we usually give it credit.

They go on and after the seals are broken and the Antichrist is let loose upon the church, how did the church survive? How did the church survive? And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their life to the death. That is the theology. That's the total power, total victory, that we have in Jesus Christ.

In our sins, in our sanctification, in our revival, and in our practical living out of victory on this earth, this is how it should be. And when Jesus gave us the prayer for us to pray in Matthew chapter 6, he said, Hallowed be your name. Holy, this is that scene again.

Holy is your name. Your kingdom come. Here's that kingdom language again.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. How is it in heaven? What kingdom is he talking about? What is the example in heaven that he wants manifested in the church on earth? It is this. That slain lamb.

The center of the universe. This is it. juxtapose that scene against all the terrible things we've done in the church in history.

Juxtapose that over every one of the Nazi belt buckles that said Gott mit uns, God with us. Juxtapose, compare this with the Crusades or with Constantine's shield. Take this and compare it to the politics of North American, the circus of North American politics.

Maybe it's better in Canada. I don't know. This example.

I believe this example that Jesus is telling the church. If we're gonna have revival, let's listen to what the Lamb says. He gives us an example that we win and we have a victory in this.

It's interesting as we go through the different seals as they pass through. There's one passage where he talks about and he's repeating what he told Peter when he told Peter to put away his sword. He told Peter there in the garden, he who lives by the sword will die by the sword.

And in Revelation, they pick it back up and it says he who leads into the captivity shall go into captivity. He who kills with a sword must be killed with a sword. Listen, here is the patience and faith of the saints.

Next chapter. Here is the patience of the saints. That was Revelation 13.

Here's Revelation 14. Here is the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

When we ponder these events that are happening as our world gets worse and worse, we think of this. It's... We think of the different empires. We're not there to the end of the world yet.

And as we go and we go, we must understand and we must pray for these leaders of our countries. We must pray for them. We have to understand which side they are.

Because here's the story. Daniel also lets us know something interesting about the end times and our leadership. Not in the church, but the leadership of the world.

He says this in Daniel 4.17. Don't miss this passage. This decision is by the decrees of the watchers and is sentenced by the word of the holy ones in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He wills. Now watch this last part.

And sets over it the lowest of men. Ouch. Pray for them.

God did not give them the sword in vain, says Romans chapter 13. They have a purpose, but we are not of this kingdom. Pray for them.

They were chosen from a hard group, but God is control. And I tell you this, when we mix this up and we don't understand it and we can't get a full revelation of that lamb, I'll tell you this, over and over in history, it has been a disaster. Listen to this.

The worst atrocities ever inflicted upon mankind have been performed by men who think they do God a service. Let me repeat this. The worst atrocities ever inflicted upon mankind have been performed by men who think they do God a service.

We can save ourselves so much trouble. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as though it had been slain. Stood a lamb.

Revival is a person. Revival is a person, and that person is a lamb. And I want to draw your attention to this lamb.

The cross. The cross. Praise be to Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the cross, Lord God. I thank you that you ransomed my soul from this world. I thank you, Lord, that you died for my sins.

The cross. But the cross is also an example. The cross of Jesus Christ is the theology of martyrdom.

The cross of Jesus Christ towers as an eternal witness to the futility of man's strength, resources, and good ideas. In his letter to the Corinthian church, warning them about the foolishness of fleshly resources, the apostle Paul taught that the true way to win does not come by might, does not come by power, but by laying down our life to the point of death. And he wrote this in 1 Corinthians 1.18. For the message of the cross is foolishness foolishness to those that are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it's the power of God. You know, these things are spiritual. They are meant for us to understand at a deep level.

But just because they are spiritually discerned, we must not make them so just theoretical. My burden is to bring revival with discipleship together. And so when we get these teachings and we understand these things, how do we walk it out practically? Sometimes if it just becomes a theory, it does have no reality to it.

It's the same thing with Pilate. When Jesus stood before Pilate, and Pilate asked him in John 18, Pilate had heard that people were calling Jesus a king, so he challenged him and said in John 18, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus took those words seriously. He just asked me a really important question.

Are you the king of the Jews? Are you speaking this for yourself or did others tell you this concerning me? John 18, 36, and Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now, my kingdom is not from here.

Now watch now how we can just spiritualize things. Pilate answered and said, Well, then are you a king then? Does that really count? Okay, you're not from this world. Are you really a king? Jesus said rightly.

Jesus said, You say rightly that I am a king, for this cause I was born. You say rightly that I am a king, for this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world to bear witness of the truth. If this gets a hold of you, it will change you.

Now that I've been in Boston, I've been doing a lot of local history on the Puritans. One of my favorites that I've found is John Elliot, one of the early Puritans who got to Boston. He was famous for translating the Aliquot Bible, the Native American Bible, and he had these revivals and these meetings with them where he would preach, and he had whole cities, they called them praying towns, of these Native Americans that were converted and believing in him.

Well, I got excited about him in a tour of the Massachusetts State House, and there was a picture of him preaching to the Native Americans. I've got to know about this guy. Well, interesting, you know, the Puritans came to America kind of like with a push during the Oliver Cromwell Puritan period.

Well, he's over there during this time. Now, Oliver Cromwell dies, and Charles II comes back to the throne. John Elliot is beside himself.

But now, dealing with these people and seeing these whole little towns of praying people and seeing the evidence of what it's like to follow Jesus, he writes a letter. I found this letter. And he writes this letter rebuking both the Americas and England, saying, let's make Jesus the king of England.

Seriously. They were so insulted by it that he got in a lot of trouble, and it's the very first thing that was ever banned in America was this letter to make Jesus king. I don't know what's going to be happening in the next coming up 10 years or so with our politics getting worse and worse, but church, don't get into these politics.

Let's be with John Elliot. Let's be with him. And I looked.

Let's look at this telescope. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as though it has been slain. You know, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gave his missionaries.

He sent out the church, the first missionaries. He gave them what he thought they would need before they went. And this is what he said in Matthew 10, 16.

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Do you understand? Do I, Dean, do you understand this attitude? In this he knew, he wants us in this age to continue to go forward and to fight for the kingdom of God.

But with this we're taking upon a different kind of sword and the new covenant. A different kind of way to fight. God cannot change.

The same God of the old covenant is the God of the new covenant. It is impossible for him to change. But the weapons of our warfare and the new covenant is powerful if we'll get a hold of this revelation.

I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. And it worked. And it worked.

Jesus taught them. He taught them about the cross. He taught them to turn his cheek.

He told them to go an extra mile. E. Stanley Jones, an early missionary teacher from India, a Methodist teacher, and he says, you know, Christianity is different than all the other religions in the way Jesus told them to deal with their enemies. Buddhists have this idea of being pacifists.

Just sitting there taking the pain. But Christianity actually feeds your enemy, prays for your enemy, and goes the second mile. This is totally, no other religion has this.

And as Paul says in Romans chapter 12, it heaps burning coals upon their head. And Jesus knew this. Compare that to those Nazi belt buckles or the white sheets burning blasphemous with crosses and crusades.

Tertullian put it this way, speaking of that lamb. Tertullian, who writing around the year 200 AD, he says, and the Lord shall save in that day even his people like sheep. He goes on and says, no one gives the name of sheep to those who fall in battle with arms in hand and while repelling force with force, but only to those who are slain, yielding themselves up for their own place of duty and with patience rather than fighting in self-defense.

He went on to say a very profound thing that we've seen over and over and over in church history and we see it today. The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church. When we take power in our own hand or try our hand at the ridiculous circus of politics through the different centuries, we've made a mess.

But when we have been willing to be non-compromising and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the blood of the martyr is still the seed of the church. But what if? It's so... I have six children. I understand you get scared.

I understand, but what if this happens? What if we don't stop Islam? What if we don't stop this party? And what if we don't do things? And there's a sense in us to fear. Paul gave us what I call the Christian atomic bomb in Romans 8, verse 35. Oh, it's powerful.

Now imagine any what if you possibly could think of. What if the Muslims take over? What if communism isn't stopped? Whatever what if, and look at the atomic bomb in Romans 8, verse 35, and he says this. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? Now watch now as it is written.

For thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Now that doesn't sound like your best life now.

Doesn't at all. For your sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Remember James and John and his mother said, can I put them on your one hand and one on the other? And Jesus loved that woman's zeal for her children and said, are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I have? Remember the story? And James and John, who wrote the book of Revelation, we are. And Jesus, look at them, you are. He knew that they were going to endure these hardships.

For it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. But here's the thing.

37, 837, Romans. Nay, in all these things, what things? Famine, nakedness, peril, sword. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded. I love when Paul gets persuaded. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That is the theology of martyrdom. And it cannot lose. We are promised it cannot lose.

Paul warned us in his pastoral letter to Timothy, taking young Timothy and wanting him to be strong in the faith and how he was going to take the faith to the different areas. And he said in 2 Timothy 3, verse 10, that you have carefully followed my doctrine, my manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance, persecution, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch and Iconium and Lystra, what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Yes, listen, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul lived this life, a theology of martyrdom. He said it this way, I'm always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest in our bodies. He talked about sharing in the suffering, sharing in the suffering of his death, being made conformable unto his death.

Dean, do you have any understanding of the depth of Paul's, what he's even talking about? God, I want to see that lamb more clearly today. I want to focus in on the center of the universe. You know, it's hard, and again, I'm a family man.

I have children, I have a wife, I've loved for 32 years, I've been married, and as I look at this, I get scared. And being able to just have those motives yourself, but do you understand the cross and the idea that how Jesus, this is how he is victorious through the centuries, is with this kind of method, the theology of martyrdom. And when people get a hold of this, it changes them.

Years ago, we had a chance to go to Scotland, and there in Scotland, you got to see in the cathedral of St. Giles, John Knox's, where he was preaching there. And John Knox came against when England was trying to say that the king of England was head of the church, and John Knox there in Scotland and the different covenanters that were there said, no, we can't say the king of England is a head of the church, and we were able to visit the covenanter's graveyard while we were there, and imagine what this would have been like, and it's so easy just to compromise on a little political thing, you know, it's just politics, just say what you need to say and be done with it. These people were non-compromising.

Interesting, John Knox's daughter, may I raise children that follow Christ like this, John Knox's daughter, married a preacher by the name of John Welch. John Welch was arrested for preaching, taken down to a dungeon in southern France, and he was dying because of respiratory problems. Finally, his wife, John Welch's wife, John Knox's daughter, after years of this, realizes after the letters she's getting from her husband, my husband's going to die.

So finally she gets a setting, because of who she is, she gets a place to be able to go see the king. And so she came up to James I, and she came to him and said, I'm pleading with you, please let my husband come at least to England where he can be in a prison here and not die. He said, no problem.

Just have him say that the king of England is the head of the church. She lifted up her apron and said, I'd rather have his head in my apron. We live in such a post-modern, compromising, nonsense world.

Do we understand the theology of martyrdom today? Can you understand that? They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life until the death. We are surrounded by so much. There's a passage in the comparison passage in Isaiah 6. Isaiah is filled with this kingdom, empire, crushing language.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. We sing that, don't we? Think about it this way. It goes on to say, of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.

God will establish it. In Isaiah 6, when he's there and we get this, there's a little portion there that really helps me in that revelation. In Isaiah 6, it kind of compares to the scene that John gave.

And as he's there in Isaiah 6 and verse 1, it says, In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on the throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his roll filled the temple. Again, it's very much like the other one. They're singing, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And he goes on to say, as he's looking at this beautiful idea up there in Isaiah 6, and this is the part that gets me, I'm a man of unclean lips. And he says this, And I dwell with a people of unclean lips.

You know what I get in that? It's so easy just to fall into the norms of our generation, of our day. We live in a, you know, it comes to the terms of an academic or philosophical way, a postmodern philosophy. Nothing matters anymore.

Everybody has their own thing. In the church, we have another philosophy that's just surrounding, and it's basically just pop American Christianity, pop Christianity. And these things are in us more than you realize.

They're in me more than I realize. And one of the biggest fears that I have, one of the biggest things that I have to fight against is taking, is not taking sin carefully enough. And this is permeating both the postmodern philosophy of the secular world and the pop Christian culture of the Christian world.

Make sin seem so casual. But I tell you, a few years ago I was in Mexico working with a mission down there, and we were in an area and a lightning struck our compound. And the children said that even a lightning flew out of the socket.

And at that moment, it was so loud, I just suddenly felt guilty. I don't know why. I was scared.

And I thought of this. Isaiah gives us the idea there in Isaiah 6 that when they cry holy, to tempt the pillars of heavenly being, but to shake the pillars of heaven, and Dean trembled over one lightning bolt? Wow. And he took that.

He said, I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell. It's in me, Lord. It's in me.

It's in me. But he took that coal off the altar and purified them. I think that's like a reference to Jesus Christ there in what John saw.

The grace of Jesus Christ is able not only to cleanse us, but to purify. It's the double cure. It's the double cure.

Cleanse us from our sins and make me pure. And make me pure. There's another scene like this.

You read through this so many. You start reading of the different ones and the faith that they had. Felix Mons, the early Anabaptist during the time of the Reformation, was being drowned in the Lamont River right down from the Grossmuster.

I've been to this spot. And Bullinger actually writes in his journal that his mother, this is in the martyr's mirror, his mother was on the side. And as they were taking him and bringing him to his death, they're wondering, what will this mother say? Now she was the mistress before she was converted of an ungodly priest.

And they had Felix Mons as an illegitimate son of an ungodly priest. And finally now they're converted and they're following God and they're about to drown Felix Mons in the water. And he even writes in his journal, he looks to the side, and she screams out, Felix, be faithful unto death.

Be faithful unto death. That's the theology of martyrdom, even for our loved ones. Even for our loved ones.

Oh God, help us. Now, this is not pacifism. Oh no.

It's not passive at all. We are at war. And God has called us to be warriors.

The Old Testament says, and Yahweh is a warrior. And remember, God cannot change. It is our warfare that has changed.

But we must be warriors. Some brother here gave us the, we must be, why are we not sharing to the lost? Why are we not taking this? God is just as jealous and earnest for his kingdom to expand as he was in the Old Covenant. But now he wants us to do it with this lamb.

In Ephesians 6.12 it says, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, church, but, we're not pacifists, against principalities and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. That's the kind of fighting we have now.

The early church, Irenaeus and Tertullian wrote letters to the emperors and say, we are more strength to you by just being a praying army than all your armies combined, paraphrase. Young men, let me ask you something. Another passage where it talks about this purity.

In 2 Corinthians 10.3.7 another fight and the enemy will get at us with so many darts. You know, it's a dart, but when you look at the way those darts were in those days, it's like a harpoon. You know, when you harpoon a fish, it goes in really easy, right? But it has a barb on it.

Those sins go in really easy. The internet, pornography, the things of the world, they slide right in, but they don't come out. That's the way, those are the darts.

And when Satan gives us these darts, we have the victory through this blood of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 10.3.7 says this, for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. We have a different battle today.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Listen, young men. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing, listen to this, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Hallelujah. Oh, we're getting overran. The enemy has come up with more and more ways to get into our imagination.

I really think we need the local church more than ever. We need accountability. In Boston, we've been trying to weekly ask each other, are you looking at any pornography? Are you doing anything that, are you fasting? Are you praying? Are you evangelizing, brother? These are things where the local church, we need this to hold each other accountable.

Jesus had teachings on this too. If your iPhone offends thee, pluck it out. If your iPhone offends thee, pluck it out.

We know better than this. You look at his teachings. You know what? I love listening to old sermons.

I download them. I listen to them. I love them.

But you know what? This lamb came to earth and he preached a sermon. And I would really encourage us to download that sermon and take a look. And as he goes through these things, he talks about the permanence of marriage.

He talks about this theology of martyrdom, of loving our enemies. He talks about radical views of economics and praying and hypocrisy. He talks about living faithfully to God.

And I wonder, if you were to take God's sermon and create yourself for a church today that goes out of its way to do every single thing opposite that Jesus said, it looks an awful lot like this pop-American church. His teachings. I am not even going to pretend to tell you that I've come to the end of his teachings.

He says, follow me, because it's a continual life. And maybe I can't quite figure out, Lord, I want to follow your teachings, but if I can't somehow figure it out, I dare not, though, anesthetize the teachings of Jesus to make myself comfortable. They're there, and yes, they're hard.

But they will bless you as your fathers of your home. They will change the way you have church. This is suffering love.

This is God. This is his teachings. It's him.

It's a lamb. Coming towards the end of his life, Napoleon was first taken to an island and escaped. Second time he was taken to an island, and finally they had him chained in such a way that he couldn't escape.

And there he wrote in his diary, in very despair, the end of his life. Interesting he wrote this in his diary, Napoleon writing this. He says, I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man.

Between him and every other person in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander the Great, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force.

Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love. And at this hour, millions of people would die for him. Millions of people would die for him.

Are you one of them? Are you one of them? So coming to close, let's look at that text. Let's ponder it. Let's let this telescope show us what we need to see.

And let's allow this slain lamb to take us where he wants us to be. It ends with, at the end of the scroll, who shall stand? Who shall stand when all this happens, when the judgment comes out? And he gives us this picture of this 144,000 and then this great multitude, which from every tribe and every tongue, all praising God. Do you feel alone sometimes? Do you feel sometimes like maybe we're the only ones? We're here in this little town, and I don't know, it's so wicked around here.

Get your eyes on that incredible scene and a multitude that no one could number singing and praising. That's the great cloud of witnesses. That's who's wanting to cheer us on.

I'll give you one more history story. One more. This is a rebuke to the church.

An early Anabaptist who was, during the time of Reformation, was a school teacher and he went preaching. And he was captured and he was put in prison and was going to be killed. And he wrote back to the church saying, you guys have given up.

It was only 1580. And he's saying that you're already giving up. And the words that he gives, boy, they just, they convict me.

And he writes the letter to the church and he says this. He says, church, written from prison, he's about to be martyred. He's writing to the church, rebuking the church for compromising already in 1580.

He says, many in our time think the opposition has ended. Many in our time think the opposition has ended. They look back and think the war is over.

But they are deceived. If they would live the life, they would get persecuted again. Listen to his reasoning.

As long as the lion has its cub with him, he might act friendly and playful enough. But when he loses his little ones, or his prey, he cannot keep himself back. He rages and roars and rants and he raves as only lions can until fire shoots from his eyes.

Certainly Peter does not warn us in vain that Satan comes to us like a roaring lion or a wolf at nightfall. But may God be praised. The lion of the tribe of Judah is bigger and stronger than the lion of the Philistines.

He has already split the other lion's head and wounded his body. Therefore he knows that his time is short and that he will also be overcome. Therefore he is so desperate, so angry.

He sees the lake of fire into which he will be thrown. Watch yourselves, therefore, heroes of Israel. Listen to this for the rest of this day.

Watch yourself, therefore, heroes of Israel. Take courage, strong men of Zion. Rejoice, O city of Jerusalem.

The time of your triumph is near. All tears will be washed from your eyes. The reward of your labor stand ready.

Just hold on a little while longer. The fat cattle have already been butchered. The fowls have been plucked.

The table stands ready and the guests have begun to arrive. That was the theology of martyrdom. So Einstein, when he looked through the telescope, repented.

Literally wrote a document saying that he was wrong. And we look through this John's telescope and look at this throne and the lamb standing that's been slain. Allow this theology of martyrdom, this life completely sold out to us, doing all the things Christ told us to do and just wanting everything we can do to follow him more and more.

Allow this life to be in us. My burden as we pray for God to speak to us, to visit us, that we will listen to what he has to say and what he said. I pray that we will do this.

We follow a lamb that was slain. May the vision of this scene change our life and may the lamb that was slain receive all glory and honor and power and strength. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, I need this, Lord. I'm that person, Isaiah. I dwell, I have unclean lips and I dwell in a people of unclean lips.

I justify myself, my time, my attitude. God, take the coal off that altar and touch it to my tongue and to my soul. Let the blood of Jesus Christ redeem me out of that whole tribe and renew again this afternoon a more powerful understanding of who you are and what you have to say.

God, we're praying for revival. In our age, we don't know what's happening as the Middle East is running here and there again and all the different chaos in American and Canadian politics. Lord, we come to you and say, God, this time, this time, Lord, we want to listen to what you have to say.

Speak to us, Lord, and may we remember that we will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony, the word of our testimony, and that we will not love our life until the death. Oh, God, we thank you for your examples. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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