

# Going Outside, The Camp, Bearing Christ's Reproach

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon delves into Hebrews 13, emphasizing Jesus' crucifixion outside the religious camp to sanctify people with His blood. It challenges Christians to bear reproach for Christ, highlighting the danger of seeking popularity and human glory over God's approval. The narrative traces historical movements where faithful individuals went 'outside the camp' to maintain true discipleship, contrasting the pursuit of God's glory with seeking honor from others.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 13:11, Hebrews 13:13, Revelation 2:4, John 5:44, Isaiah 42:8

**Topics:** "Bearing Reproach for Christ", "True Discipleship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I'd like to turn to Hebrews chapter 13. There's a reason why Jesus was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem. Inside the gates were all the religious people who were celebrating the Passover that day.

But it says Jesus was outside the gate. And this was symbolized in the Old Testament by what we read in Hebrews 13 verse 11. The animals, the bodies of the animals whose blood is brought into the holy place, those bodies were burnt outside the camp because it would be polluting the camp if they burnt it inside.

There was something unclean about those bodies, so they said we can't have that inside. And Jesus also, in order to sanctify the people with his own blood, he suffered outside the gate. He was treated as one who was despised, not fit enough to be among the holy people.

That is an aspect of Christ which is often not understood by many Christians today. So what should we do? So let us, verse 13, go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. Now how do we know we have gone outside? You see here this camp that is spoken of here is not the camp of worldly people.

No, the worldly people are in Rome, Greece, and the rest of the world. This camp in Jerusalem was the camp of the most religious people on the face of the earth. There was no one anywhere in the world who had the true scriptures except the Jews who were in Jerusalem.

They were the most religious people on earth, and it's outside that camp that Jesus died to show that he was rejected by the most religious people and those who consider themselves more spiritual. And he says, let us go also outside the camp bearing his reproach. It's a good question to ask ourselves how much reproach we have suffered in our life for the stand we have taken for Christ with other religious people, maybe in our place of work or with our relatives who don't see the type of Christianity we are seeking to live as being true Christianity.

Have any of your relatives thought you were fanatics and crazy? I know mine have. To me that is one indication that I'm outside the camp. See here in the United States, I find Christianity can be a very respected thing.

Some of the greatest preachers in the United States are friends with the president, with all the presidents, meeting with all of them, and Jesus would not be like that. I'm not criticizing any of them. I'm just saying Jesus would not be like that.

He was not a friend of Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate and all. There's something wrong with this Christianity. But yet that is the popular version of Christianity accepted in this country.

Not only here, everywhere. But I know in the villages of India, some of the finest Christians who've come out of Hinduism, who've been rejected by their parents, suffered so much loss, even financially, in many other ways. I mean I get emails almost every day from different people who suffer in different parts of India because of rejection by their closest people who are closest to them, their relatives.

And if you look at the history of Christianity, true Christianity has always been rejected. By the majority. That is going outside the camp, bearing his reproach.

Let me give you an example from Revelation in chapter 2. In Revelation chapter 2, we read about the church in Ephesus. That was a church which the apostle Paul planted, the greatest apostle of that first century. And there's no church where he spent as long as he did in Ephesus, three years.

Can you imagine the privilege a church would have had to have three years the apostle Paul preaching? And we read in Acts chapter 20, when he called the elders, you read it sometime, he called the elders of Ephesus together and he said, I was with you for three years and I preached to you day and night. He used to have early morning meetings and evening meetings. Something like John Wesley in England.

In his days, he would go out early morning at five o'clock and preach to people before they went to work. Those who wanted to listen. And then he'd have meetings late in the evening.

That's how Paul was. And imagine having meetings morning and evening for three years. What's that? 2000 sermons.

Can you imagine the privilege of listening to Paul, listening to 2000 sermons of Paul in a period of three years? That's what made that church the most spiritual church of that time. How do we know that? Because the greatest truths in the New Testament are given in the letter to the Ephesians. That's how we know.

Paul says in one Corinthians chapter two to the Corinthians, he says, I can only tell you about Jesus Christ crucified. Christ died for your sins because you're babes. But we speak wisdom, he says in one Corinthians two with those who are wise that he could write to the Ephesians.

So Ephesus was the finest church of the first century when Paul's time. But he says when he's leaving after three years, you read in Acts 20, he says, I know after I leave, things will be different here. The other elders will not be as strict as I was.

They will seek to be popular and accepted. And some will draw disciples after themselves. They'll seek popularity.

And the wolves are waiting outside. He says the wolves will come in. That's what Paul said.

Why couldn't the wolves come in when Paul was there? They were scared. They couldn't do anything. Those wolves of Satan would say, we can't do anything.

This guy, Paul is there. We can't touch this church. But they said, well, he's an old, he's getting old and he won't be there forever.

Let's see what happens to the church once he goes. And sure enough, Paul didn't say that as a prophecy. He said that as a warning.

And they didn't take that warning seriously. I've seen many churches where I've preached and I've given them a warning. They don't take it seriously.

I've seen what's happened after a few years. In Revelation chapter 2, to this church in Ephesus, he says, there are such a lot of good qualities in you. Verse 2, your deeds, your hard work, your perseverance.

Imagine if a Christian had all these qualities, good deeds, hard work. Verse 2, perseverance. You cannot tolerate evil men and you test all those false teachers and prove them to be false.

And your perseverance, you don't give up. You have endured for my name's sake and you have not given up. You're not grown weary.

But with all these good qualities, there's one side of the balance, weighing balance. On the other side, this is all that you have. On the other side, there's something you don't have.

You don't have a fervent love for me. And that makes that side of the balance go right down. All these good things are worthless if you don't have a fervent love for Christ.

Everything you do, go to a good church, you know so much of the scriptures, you know the doctrines, the fervent love for Christ is absent. He says, you have fallen. Verse 5. Now many people don't think when their love for Christ decreases that they have fallen.

They just say, oh, well, I've cooled off a little. Well, you haven't cooled off, brother. You have fallen.

You have fallen to the bottom. When your love for Christ is gone, when a fervent love for Jesus Christ has gone out of your heart and is being replaced by the love of your job or the love of money or the love of something else, you have fallen, fallen right to the bottom. And so bad that the Lord says, if you don't repent, I'm going to de-recognize you as a church.

That's a paraphrase of verse 5. I will remove the lampstand. The lampstand was a symbol that that was a church Jesus approved of. He says, I'm going to de-recognize you.

You say, Lord, with such a lot of good qualities, perseverance, good deeds, and they test false apostles. Yeah, all those things are worthless. They don't love me fervently.

And I have a feeling that these guys sought popularity. And that's why Paul was one person who never sought popularity for anything. He didn't care whether his message was appreciated or not, whether he was an accepted apostle, whether the presidents of a country would welcome him to meet with him, all garbage in Paul's eyes.

It says Moses, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And he was there. He already was in the palace and he didn't want it.

And that's why he was a man who knew God face to face. I love that word in Numbers 12, where God says to Miriam and Aaron, when they criticized Moses, he said, you don't know who you're criticizing. All these other prophets, they, I speak to them in visions.

But this man, Moses, who's in your midst, just because he's very humble, the Bible says that he was the humblest man on earth, just because he doesn't have any airs about himself. He doesn't try to show off and impress himself to you. You think he's a nobody.

I speak to him face to face. He's not like the other prophets who get dreams and visions and all these things that many Pentecostals and charismatics talk about. I speak to him face to face.

Yeah, he was unique. And it says here that finally this, I believe this church in back split and this man did not repent. But in the midst of that, verse seven, he invites the overcomers.

This is what I see in all the seven churches is a group of overcomers who listen to the call to repentance. And I thought in Ephesus, what would happen if this man did not repent? And I think he did not repent. The Lord says, I will leave your midst.

That means the lamp stand gone means Christ has left the church, but the church would still continue to have its meetings, its conferences, its singing, and all types of things that go on worship services, special meetings, but Christ is not there. There are thousands of churches like that in the world today. Very few people recognize the presence of Christ.

For me, there's one mark of the presence of Christ. And that's what years ago I read in Luke 24, when the disciples were walking to Emmaus and Jesus walked with them. And it was a three hour journey.

The Bible says that it was a 10, seven miles from Jerusalem to Ephesus. Emmaus, it says that in Luke 24, and that takes about three hours. So at three hours, it says Jesus opened the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi and explained to them and showed them himself, Christ in all the scriptures in those days, scriptures, just the Old Testament.

And imagine they listened to an exposition of Genesis to Malachi. And it wasn't just academic teaching with this point and this point and three points and all these preachers who present their three point sermons to impress people. It wasn't like that.

When they sat at home and thought about it, they said to each other, didn't our hearts burn within us? As we heard him, imagine listening to a preacher for three hours, and all those three hours your heart is burning. That is the mark of the presence of the Lord in the church. When he's gone, it's just dry old academic stuff that umpteen preachers can preach.

There's no fire. There's no stirring up anyone seeking popularity. And so what would have happened to these overcomers when they say the Lord has left? Well, what does the bride do when the bridegroom has left the wedding hall? The bride doesn't hang around there anymore.

She says the bridegroom is gone. I'm going to. Those overcomers would have left.

There may be only about five or 10 in this big church of Ephesus with 500 people, 10 people left and the church in Ephesus said, ah, those people are always troublemakers, always questioning, why is it like this? Why is it like that? We're glad we got rid of them. When those 10 people went outside and met in some home, perhaps they were not rich enough to rent a hall or anything, and Jesus was there. That was the second church in Ephesus.

And Christ was with the second one, not the first one. Give another 40, 50, 60 years, the same thing happens to that second church that happened to the first one. And these people who came out, they've died.

Their next generation has come up and they don't know the Lord. It says in the book of Judges that the people who lived after Joshua did not know the Lord like Joshua knew the Lord. And it's happened throughout the centuries.

And so what happens from the second church in Ephesus, some overcomers get fed up and the Lord leaves the second church in Ephesus and these overcomers go out and there's a third church in Ephesus. Again, another 10, 12 people meeting in a house. That's how it begins.

And the Lord is there. And they had the reproach of Christ, this thing that we read of, outside the camp. All these people went outside the camp.

The main camp was this big respected building with 500 people and the outside of the camp were these 10 people meeting with the Lord. And that grew to be a respectable number and they got outside the camp. It's always been this, not just in the first and second century, it's been the case for 20 centuries.

You know how the Roman Catholic Church made itself a big institution beginning with getting the support of the Roman Emperor right from the fourth century onwards. And so many people, though we read of some great saints like Francis of Assisi and there were Bernard of Clairvaux and some of these people have written some great hymns and all that. But there was only one man who had the guts to say you Pope and all of you are wrong when you teach that salvation comes by eating this bread and cup and putting money in the offering box.

That was Martin Luther. He was a monk. I admired that man.

I don't agree with all his theology, but I admire the man, the courage he had at that time to stand against a system that is against God's word. They didn't make him popular, no. They hunted him for his life, but God would not let him die until his purpose was accomplished.

Like John Wesley said, I am immortal until my life's work is done. Every true servant of God, no one can kill him till his life's work is done. They tried to kill Jesus, but they couldn't kill him till his life's work is done.

And if you're a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, no one can kill you, not even cancer until your life's work is done. So many people tried to kill him. Emperors tried to kill Martin Luther.

They couldn't kill him. He stood, translated the Bible into German and proclaimed salvation is by grace through faith. I thank God for him.

But what happened to the church he started? Same thing. Give it a hundred years and it's corrupt. And men who knew God like Martin Luther were not there.

Then God raises up a man called John Wesley in England to proclaim holiness. He was a fearless man. They tried to kill him.

They couldn't kill him. He was immortal till his life's work was done. It was always this thing.

He had to go outside the camp. They would not allow him to preach in the Lutheran or the Anglican church, which Luther started. John Wesley was not allowed to preach in the church Martin Luther started, which is known as the Anglican church in England.

So he had to go outside of the camp and he started the Methodist church. And the Lord was there. The glory had gone.

Outside the camp, it was always outside the camp like you read in Hebrews 13, bearing the reproach. And of course, the Anglican church said, these guys are all heretics. These guys would call themselves Methodists.

But God used that Methodist church amazingly around the world. But give another hundred years, John Wesley is dead. Another generation comes.

It's like it says a new generation grew up after Joshua who did not know the Lord like Joshua. And you know this, into this Methodist church came a young man called William Booth. Unknown young man, but a zealous witness for the Lord.

And he used to bring the prostitutes and the drunkards to hear the word of God in this Methodist church. And the decent Methodist people would just move away on the bench so they don't sit near this man. And finally, the pastor told William Booth, see, we don't want you to bring all these people here.

This is a place for holy people, not these wretched sinners. What did William Booth do? He had to go outside the camp of the Methodist church, which John Wesley started. And thank God he did and started the Salvation Army.

What a work the Salvation Army did to bring people to Christ. It's always been like that, but where is the Salvation Army today? 150 years later, I wouldn't join it. It's been like that throughout history.

There's no movement that can continue. Then came the Baptist preaching water baptism, very important, which is not even preached by Martin Luther or John Wesley. The Baptist preached water baptism, became unpopular.

The early Anabaptist priesthood, and they were killed for preaching water baptism. And then came the Pentecostal movement that taught the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And where's that today? It's always been like this.

And I believe the reason is people have sought popularity. Then faith is gone. Do you know this verse in John chapter five? Now, I'm not saying this to criticize all these people, God bless them and their generation.

If I were living in John Wesley's time, I would have joined them. If I were living in William Booth's time, I would have joined him. I would have been with the current move of God in this generation, not the move of God in the last generation.

I always want to move with where God is moving today. Why did you join this church? Is it because this is a nice place for our children to grow up? Well-behaved children, good Sunday school, lovely people who will help me to move my house when I have to move my house. I don't have to employ people for that.

And so many wonderful things, right? You'll never make it. Let's choose a church because that is where God is moving now in this generation. Not with just clever preachers, but who will set your hearts on fire.

John five, it says, verse 44, how can you believe? You know, faith is the most important thing to progress with God. We walk by faith. We run the race of faith.

We live by faith. But the Lord says, how can you have faith when you're seeking glory from one another? You want to be popular. You want to be in a church that's popular.

You work in a place and you want to be popular with your boss. And so you compromise. You don't stand up for what is righteous in your office because you may lose your job.

You won't get that promotion. Is that how you're training your children? Be popular in your school. Be popular in your college.

Don't offend anybody. Don't talk about things that will create problems. There are preachers like that.

Don't talk about things that will create strife and controversy. No, just speak about general subjects. Be good.

Be nice to everybody. Help one another. Help the poor.

You keep preaching that even the most, even the non-Christian groups will accept you. You're not a disciple of Christ. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and don't seek the glory that comes only from the one and true God? I want to ask all of you a direct question, my brothers and sisters.

And you don't have to answer it to me. Answer it to yourself. Can you answer that question in verse 44? Can you say, I seek glory only, only, only from the one and only God.

I do not seek honor or appreciation or approval or glory from any human being. Blessed are you. If you keep that attitude, you'll make more progress in one year than other Christians make in 50 years.

Because glory is a very important thing. It's the opposite of reproach. If I bear the reproach of Christ means I'm not seeking any glory for myself and being a Christian.

I'm not seeking to know the President of the United States and be photographed with him because of my Christian faith. And I'm a great preacher whom even the President recognizes. To me, that's a lot of garbage.

I respect presidents. I respect authorities. I respect even non-Christian authorities in a country because God has appointed them as authorities.

But I don't seek their approval. There's a lot of difference between, we must respect every authority. But to seek their approval? No.

They're not wholehearted disciples of Jesus. How can they understand what we stand for? And we don't seek the approval of bishops or popes or archbishops or anybody or any Tom, Dick or Harry. The glory, what did we read there? The glory that comes from the only true God.

God's looking for people like that. God will give us many things. His love, His nature, His power.

Do you know there's one thing God will never give us? Isaiah 42, you must know it. Verse 8. Isaiah 42, 8, I am the Lord. That is my name.

The Lord says, my glory I will never give to another. And when you touch the glory of God, when you seek credit for yourself through your Christian faith, or when you seek some honor for yourself in any way, you are touching the glory of God. We're not supposed to get glory or honor on this earth.

If people want to give it, let them give it, but we don't seek it and we don't want it. Yeah, people will appreciate us when we are upright and good. That's okay.

But the question is, what do you want it? Are you looking for it? Even within the church, are you looking, my brother, for somebody here to come and appreciate you saying you're a great Christian? You're a wonderful brother. You're a wonderful sister. Oh, you're so wholehearted and you're such a blessing to others and you're so kind and so helpful and all that.

I'll tell you this, you're not going to grow much spiritually. No. You'll keep living with that honor till one day you stand before the Lord and discover you've wasted your earthly life because you sought honor from me.

Go outside the camp bearing his reproach because the Lord will not allow any human being to touch his glory that belongs only to him. You can have the Lord's power, you can have his nature, you can have his love, but you cannot have the glory that belongs only to God. Let's repent and be careful.

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