



The Fear of God – Part 4 And Our Suffering Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, I'm used to carrying around a wad of keys, not a lot, but maybe 10, and recently I realized you don't need, at least I don't, need all those keys every day. So I got in the habit of detaching my car key. They call it a fob now, whatever that means, and I just stick it in my pocket. I thought, how much more convenient is this just to carry around my little fob of my car keys? It's awesome. I don't even need to stick it in the dash. Just make sure it's in your pocket. I mean, you know, most of you have that going on and that's really convenient. It's also easy to lose it. Friday, I lost my car key. I lost it. I went to lunch. I had a quick lunch break around noon and used the fob, apparently, my car started and I went where I needed to go. I had a lunch appointment, came back and didn't realize until it was time to be done. I was actually ahead of schedule. It was, I don't know, 6:15 and I think, "I'm OK. I'm getting out of here. It'll be great." And I can't find my car key. And of course, you think, well, maybe it's in the car. Of course it would open up if it was in the car. I could not find it in my car. I searched up and down, went and told my assistant we've got to search, turned the office upside down. So we did everything we could to try and find the car key. And then I was like, done, like, I'm done, I'm done. I'm just going to go. Well, I mean, that's really what went through my mind. Like, I'm done looking. I'm just going to be done. I'll look for it tomorrow. Well, then I realize I can't go anywhere. I can't get in my car.

There is a key to the Christian life and you're not going anywhere without it. I mean, not only you're not going to go down the highway, it's like you're not even getting in the car without this key. And I know many of you know this. You probably often state it in terms of the words that Jesus used himself. I mean, when he's distilled everything down into what's the right response to all of this, he made it clear. Right? "Love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind." I mean, I guess simply to supremely love the triune God. I mean, that's the key right there. In a phrase, that's the key. You're not going anywhere without it.

I think it's helpful sometimes to state it in the negative, to think of it in the negative, and Jesus often put it that way. It's not just recognizing that God is God, and if God is God, then God comes first and I love him first. It's that he turned that on its head and he often said, now, remember that means you don't love yourself first. Matter of fact, there are going to be times when if you're not first, it'll feel like you hate yourself because you're putting God first. Sometimes people in your family will think that you hate them, at least it'll feel that way, because you're putting him first. And he often called people to think about it, even to the place of think about this like taking up your cross. A cross where you would be impaled, you would be whipped and you'd be beaten and then put on this cross. Think about the pain that it might cause you to follow me. And that's not the way we like to put it. Especially the word "love" today, we can define it in such emotional ways. We don't like to think in terms of the negative of that, which means that sometimes it's going to be like I take such a backseat to the love and supreme devotion to God that I get the short end of the stick, that I end up having to suffer.



I guess the ultimate act of saying God comes first is what the martyrs experienced, and that is that I give up everything, including my own life. And I guess if you were to distill in a statement the negative side, the inverse side of loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, it's really asking yourself the question, am I willing to die for Christ? I mean, that would be the ultimate giving up my stuff for him. I mean, is that something I've thought of lately? It really is the key, if you think about it, you're not even getting in. It says in Matthew Chapter 19, when this rich young ruler came to Christ and he says, "Oh, yeah, God's first, God's first, I keep all his commandments." This is great. Prove it to me. The first command is to have no other God before me. How about all your stuff? Are you willing to leave all your stuff behind?

And it wasn't like, well, you can't be a super-duper supercharged Christian and drive 120 miles an hour down the road unless you... He says no, you can't even enter the kingdom of God without that. And here Peter turns around and says, "Well, we've given up all kinds of things." And Jesus reminds him, before the gospels are over, you're going to give up your life. Peter, you're going to give up your life for me. That's a hard thing for us to think about, but a good thing for us, as morbid as it is, I want you to think this morning, if the cold steel barrel of a gun were against your head and it came down to would you die for Christ? If they're going to slip the noose around your neck and you were going to die, if they were going to strap you to a pillar and start a fire under you and you'd be burned at the stake, would you say, well, wait a minute, that's what it means if push comes to shove and if devotions are in conflict, that he wins and I lose. I mean, that's a big statement.

What would you die for? Or in this case, who would you die for? I would think some of you, even in our, you know, secularized culture, we have enough influence from the culture to see some relationships as so key that some people, even non-Christians will say, "Oh, I know some people I'd die for, I'd die for my kids, die for them. I'd take a bullet for them." And I don't doubt that. But the question is, if you want to get in this thing called Christianity, the key is you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength. All of your heart, soul, all of your strength, all your mind. And I guess that's not a bad question to ask as we sit here in the parking lot in South Orange County. "Hey, have you thought about dying for Christ?"

As has been rightly said, you never really, truly live for something, I mean, fully live for something, unless you have thought through, "Would I die for that something?" And a lot of people in modern Christianity really aren't living fully for Christ, in part because they haven't really thought about am I willing to die for Christ. Because once you settle that, you see all the things in between are like, well, like if I'm willing to die, if I would step up to that executioner and say, for the love of Christ, I would give my life like the martyrs did in the book of Acts. Well, then, if it's inconvenience, if it's losing a relationship, if it's losing a job, if it's losing some income, losing a client, losing the respect of my neighbors, I'd lose all that. We've got to deal with that.

And there's nothing in studying the book of Acts that's going to come through more clearly than describing those early disciples as being all in. Matter of fact, when the pronouns shift to first-person plural pronouns and Luke is on a traveling journey with the apostle Paul, starting in 16, Chapter 16, by the time he's in Chapter 21, he records something that Paul says when



he's warned not to go to Jerusalem because they want to kill you there. "I mean, you could get arrested, you could be incarcerated, you might be executed in Jerusalem" and they start weeping. "Don't go, don't go. You going to put yourself in harm's way."

And Paul says in Chapter 21 of Acts he says, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?" He says, "I'm not only willing to go to Jerusalem and be imprisoned, I am willing to die for the name of Jesus Christ." That's not varsity Christianity, that really is what it means to love God supremely. Do you love God more than yourself? That's a hard question, but a good one, a fundamental one. It is a key, I would say it's the fundamental key, of what it means to demonstrate that you're his. That's what real Christianity looks like. God is first. God is God, and it really comes down to saying I'm not. So my stuff comes second and sometimes a distant second. And sometimes when it's polarized, it's either this is good and this is bad, then it's good for God and his agenda and this is bad for me and my X, Y, Z, whatever it might be.

Once you determine that and you really think that and revisit that from time to time, you recognize that everything less than death becomes a willing sacrifice. In the book of Acts, we really split the narrative in half here in Acts Chapter 5, where the apostles are called before the Sanhedrin, that's the courts of their day, the judges of their day. This big group of people had all gathered to find out why in the world the apostles weren't obeying them. And Peter's response, as we studied last time we were together in Acts is, "We're going to obey God rather than you." You're not the boss of me and you're really not. God is the boss. God is God to us, and you're not God to me. So I'm going to do what he says, even if that doesn't make you happy and even if there are consequences. And so there were.

The consequences get laid out here in the bottom of Acts Chapter 5, and I want you to study it with me, because if we can think in these terms, it will clarify in your heart what it means to love God first. And it will help you, whether it's this week, this month or sometime between now and the time we're done with this life when you have to pay the price for being a Christian, you're going to say, "I'm willing to pay it. Happy to do it. I'm honored to do it." That's how this passage ends.

Let's look at how it starts in verse 33. Acts Chapter 5 verse 33. And it really is jumping into the middle of this because when Peter said we're going to obey God rather than men, you can look up there in the paragraph preceding this and you can see that that's what he says. And then he's not even satisfied with that. It's like now you need to know the gospel. And he starts talking about the fact that Christ died and he died for forgiveness. They get it. "You're trying to pin this on us. You're trying to say we're guilty. You're trying to put this man's blood on us," which, of course, they judicially did turn over Jesus, the same court, to Pilate to be crucified.

But more than that, as we saw in Acts Chapter 2, even if you weren't there, our sin put him on that cross. His blood on that cross was because I am a sinner. And that's the whole point of the gospel, recognizing that, confessing that and getting the forgiveness. As we saw last time, that's a good thing for everyone if we're going to be faithful to this message. But it made them mad. Look at verse 33. "When they heard this, they were enraged and they wanted to kill



them." So this is the first thing they get is animosity and hatred, and just like the Sanhedrin turned Christ over to be killed, it looks like they're next.

Contrastive conjunction, verse 34, "But..." There's some assuaging of this anger, there is someone who speaks this voice of reason, someone who calms them down. His name is Gamaliel. We don't know anything about what happens to him in terms of his faith. But it seems like at least he's wanting to slow things down to think about what they're doing here as the Sanhedrin court. He says maybe we need to slow this down and he does. The Pharisee, Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, I mean, he's all trafficking in the law of Moses, he knows the Old Testament and he was held in honor by all the people as Josephus, the Jewish historian that was conscripted by the Romans to write the Jewish history in the first century, he says the same thing. Gamaliel was like this top revered teacher of the law.

Well, here he is in the biblical account, standing up, giving orders to put the men outside for a little while. "Let's let the accused go outside because we need to talk, guys." And it's a big group. We got 70 that are officially on the court and probably many more than that who are there listening. So they take out the 12 apostles and he says, let's talk, verse 35. "Men of Israel, take care what you're about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be someone, and a number of men, about 400 joined him. He," Theudas, "was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and it came to nothing. And after him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him. He, too, perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

So in this present case I tell you, keep away from these men," let's not get all entangled in this, let's not kill them, "let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, well," it's going to be like those others, "it will fail." If this whole Jesus thing is no big deal then it'll be no big deal. "But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them." Maybe Gamaliel had even heard Jesus say that, or at least the report of Jesus saying, "I'm going to build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." We're going to succeed as a movement in this world, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. He's saying, well, if that could be true, maybe let's just think if it's true, we won't be able to stop it. As a matter of fact, "You might even be found opposing God!" Now, they were angry. They were enraged. They wanted to kill them, but that sound reason prevailed and they took his advice.

"And when they had called in the apostles," remember how angry they were, "they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus." Well, they'd already done that a couple of chapters earlier, but they're going to say it again and this time they're going to beat them up. Matter of fact, that word "beat" is the word "to flog" in Greek, and it's the word that is used of the Jewish officials whipping people. Matter of fact, even in the Roman process of whipping people who were going to be crucified, they would take them with leather straps, tie them to a big post. They would rip off their cloak and bare their back and then they would be whipped with what was called the cat-of-nine-tails you probably heard of. This multipronged whip and they would lay open and bloody their back. The Jews wouldn't allow that to happen more than 40 times. And so they're always careful to give the, as Paul said, 40 lashes minus one. So,



39. And that may have been what happened here. They got flogged. Sometimes the translations will translate it that way, flogged or whipped. Painful. And they said, "Stop, no more preaching in the name of Jesus."

Verse 41, take careful note of this verse. They were in a lot of pain, they complained a lot, they were frustrated, they got really mad. They said, "Now, let's not preach in this town anymore. Matter of fact, maybe we can move on to Samaria or the ends of the earth, but not in this town." Highlight all that. Is that there? No. "Then they left the presence of the council," not licking their wounds but "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day," the very thing they were told not to do, "every day in the temple," the assembly, and their Home Fellowship Groups, "from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus." They didn't stop. They just wanted to keep going. That's huge. But it came with a price.

I mean, the first price in verse 33 is they made people mad, they made people in authority mad, they had people wanting to kill them. That's a big deal, is it not? And then at the end, we see in verse 40, they actually got whipped, they got beaten. And that's a bad thing, too. I don't want to get whipped because of my Christianity. And yet I might be. As a matter of fact, Jesus said to his apostles, they're going to do that to you. They're going to put you out of the synagogue. And even people who want to kill you are going to think they're doing a service to God. You're going to have a price on your head. So you just need to be ready. Just like I'm going to be crucified by the Jewish Sanhedrin and ultimately the Romans are the tool by which they crucified me. It's going to happen to you guys too. Take up your own cross. If you're taking notes, this is no surprise to them. They were warned by Christ. You should be warned as well because Scripture says the same thing. In our minds you might you might as well be ready to pay the ultimate price and everything in between. You need to count the cost of allegiance to Christ.

For them this day it was hatred, it was beatings, whippings. Number one on your online, jot that down, we need to "Count the Cost of Allegiance to Christ." What is it going to cost? I use that phrase because Jesus used that phrase. As a matter of fact, once you jot that down, go to Luke Chapter 14. I want you to look at verse 33. I talk about getting in the car. You cannot get in the car without, here's the word, verse 33, "renouncing all that you have." The rich young ruler wasn't willing to renounce all that he had. Renouncing is the word that I am giving up claim on it. It's no longer mine. I'm letting someone else control my stuff and if they want to call it and say I'm going to take that, then I let them have it. I put everything, we sometimes say, put it on the altar, just like Abraham put his son Isaac on the altar. There's the picture of letting it go. I love this person, but I'm going to let them go. And if God doesn't want them, then they're not going to be in my life. If God is going to take my own life, I'll give my own life. I'm going to give it all up, I'm going to renounce everything. So therefore, take a look at the verse, verse 33, "Any one of you who does not renounce," how much? "All that he has cannot be my disciple."

"Well, there are some things that are important to me, and I don't want to renounce them." I get that. But letting God be God and to state it positively, to love God supremely with all my



heart, all my soul, all my strength, all my mind, everything else has to be second. Sometimes, as I said, when they're pitted against one another, it's going to seem like I hate the one and love the other. That's just the way it is. You can only have one ultimate loyalty. And when there's big crowds listening to someone talk about forgiveness and eternal life and freedom from sin and addiction and all that, people are going to get excited about that. In verse 25, they did get excited about that. Big crowds started to come around to hear Jesus preach. You can get big crowds to come around and listen to people preach about forgiveness and heaven and good things like that, but you've got to be really clear about the price.

"Well, wait a minute, talking about price, I thought salvation was a free gift." It is a free gift. It's a gift to you that Jesus paid. He paid it fully. You can't earn it. But when you grab on to this forgiveness, if you hold on to this forgiveness that God gives us, it's going to cost you to stand with Christ. Remember in the beginning of Luke, Luke Chapter 2, it says Christ is going to be born and he's going to be a "sign to be opposed." He's going to be a target of the animosity of the world. He's not going to be well received by people in culture. Satan is going to unleash everything against Christ and then First John 3 says, "Don't be surprised when the world hates you." It's going to happen to you.

So I need to know that there's a price to pay and he starts to talk about that in verse 26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes," this is quite a list, "even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Hate? Sometimes when I put someone else in a supreme spot besides myself or the loved ones around me, then it seems like, as a little kid might say, blurting it out emotionally, it's like "You hate me. What, do you hate me? Because I don't get what I want from you."

Sometimes when I put God first, other people think they're getting ripped off. Sometimes I think I'm getting ripped off. Verse 27, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, can't be my disciple." You say, "I don't like that." Well, you better count the cost. "Which one of you desiring to build a tower," verse 28, "does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" You're going to remodel your kitchen, you better figure out ahead of time, do I have enough to complete it. You tear it up, tear out the tile, take the refrigerator, take the stove out, rip it all up. And I come over to your house and it's that way and you say, "Oh, it's been that way for a year." Why? "Well, because I started to remodel my kitchen but I didn't have enough money." Well, you should have thought of that ahead of time. "Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation," verse 29, "and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him." Of course I would. I would say this, "You're not very smart." "This man began to build and was not able to finish."

That's why some of you right now even thinking about losing respect for doing some of the basic things God asks you to do, even in the middle of this COVID situation, saying, "Well, I'm going to continue to do some of these things that God clearly says are a priority to me." I think you shouldn't say, "Well, now I'm going to decide whether or not I'm going to stand with Christ." I mean, you should have done that at the beginning. But every now and then, we have to stop and reassess. Am I willing to pay the price?



Because the price can ramp up, as we saw last time we were together, from rejection of our message to ridicule for us as messengers, to then restrictions on us doing what we're called to do, restricting our message, restricting the exclusivity of Christ, the Christian ethic of sexuality, whatever it might be. And then on to retaliation and retribution, real kinds of beatings and beheadings. That's the kind of stuff that happens around the world and it happens in the book of Acts, they get stoned to death. You need to count the cost. You need to think about the barrel against your temple, are you willing to die for Christ?

Well, if you are, well, then clearly we have our priorities straight. God is God, I am not and I have counted the cost. I'm going to finish this race no matter how it ends. As Paul said, "I count my life as worth nothing to me, but only to finish the race." I'm going to do what God asked me to do. Why? Because he's in charge. That's why he talks about kings next, verse 31, "What king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he's able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000." Kings? You may be a king. Right? You're a monarch of your little life. You run your little life. Here's the thing you've been encountering in the Scripture and preaching or some evangelists in your life saying, well, there's another king, he's the King of kings. Now, he's got more power, more authority and in the end, he wins. So 20,000 beats 10,000 any day, certainly in hand-to-hand combat in the old school fighting of the first century.

So you ought to do what it says next, verse 32, "While the other is still a great way off," he's not here yet, his judgment hasn't come, "he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace." Well, the only terms of peace when a king with a bigger army than you with your little army is for you to surrender. And that's what we basically spelled out with a verse we started with, verse 33, "So therefore, any one of you does not renounce all that he has." That's what you do when you surrender. You surrender your nation, your armies. You say, "OK, I guess you're in charge now. What do you want my troops to do?" And that's what we say. What do you want me to do with my job? What do you want me to do with my relationships? What do you want to do with my income? What do you want me to do with my future? What do you want to do with my life? That's Christianity 101. That's the key. The car is not going anywhere. You're not getting in the car without knowing God has to be God in this relationship.

Count the cost of allegiance to Christ. That's hard to do, maybe even dreadful for you to think about the terribly morbid things I've just painted in your mind about someone putting a noose around your neck and saying, "Do you love Christ more than you love yourself?" That's a hard thing to think. But it's a natural thing to think if, in fact, you realize that the king is the king. And Gamaliel started to toy with this idea, "Maybe this is a God thing, and if God is in this, then we would be opposing God if we fought it."

I'm not going to reread the text. You know, you remember this from Acts Chapter 5. He says, "Guys, slow down. We've seen people rise up and they were nothing and it dispersed, it went away. But if Christ really was who he said he was and these people are following the dictates of Christ, then one day Christ is going to not only succeed in whatever he calls his people to do through his people, but the people are going to be vindicated. We're going to be fighting God. We don't want to fight God." Gamaliel started to show a little bit of fear here. I said it last



time we were together, the government needs to fear, our leaders need to fear God. We need to think the way Gamaliel did here and say, "Well, wait a minute, I may fear the price I have to pay, the jobs I have to lose, the friends that will no longer like me, the trouble I might get into, the money that might be at risk. But I fear being disloyal to God more than I fear the consequences of being loyal to God."

Number two, I put it that way. "Fear the Cost of Disloyalty to Christ." I need to fear that. What would it mean? We've had a lot of leaders in the past who have said you don't want to be on the wrong side of history, they say. Because they don't want you to look back on your life and go, "Man, I was some stick-in-the-mud, religious fundamentalist Bible thumper, and I said things were wrong when, in fact, I'll look back on this 20 years from now and say, well, they were right. I need to be on the right side of history." The progressive thinking about people moving toward whatever it is they're moving toward, which I can define it, it's them doing whatever they want to do and getting you to say there are no constrictions. It's basically Psalm 2, "Cast off these chords. I don't want to be constricted by God's morality." That's what they want. That's the progression in that direction. And they say you get on board with us so that you can be on the right side of history.

I hope you're keeping up with your Daily Bible Reading, if not jump on today, it's a great text. We're reading through Daniel. Daniel's got some big-league leaders who Daniel is standing before, like Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 2. He dreams about this big idol. Remember that head of gold and all that? It's got this middle abdomen and it's got these legs and thighs and feet and all these represent these successive kingdoms and talks about you, "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, you're the head of Gold in Babylon and you're great and you're powerful." Then we got the Persians who are going to come, the Mido-Persians and we got this next empire that's going to come, which we find out later as history unfolds, it's going to be Greece, and then even further, we're going to have Rome here, this partly brittle, partly strong, and then in the end, diversified kingdom. And all that was really interesting as God talks about all these powers of earth.

But the whole point of Daniel interpreting the dream was, you better be on the right side of history because one day, if you might remember that passage, we just read it this week, there's going to be a rock and here's how it's described, Daniel says it this way, it's hewn or "cut from the mountain," not with hands, "not with human hands." This is of divine origin. That rock is going to come and smash these feet. This last kingdom that's going to come, it's going to be obliterated. As a matter of fact, today, it reiterates that.

As a matter of fact, I got to turn you to this, Daniel 7 is where we were today. Daniel Chapter 7. If you haven't read your Daily Bible Reading yet, here's a preview of what you're going to read today and tonight. What a great section. Drop down to verse 21, just two verses. When I think about what I'm afraid of, I need to not be afraid of dying for Christ as much as I'm afraid of not dying for Christ, if Christ asks me to die for him. I don't want to be on the wrong side of history. And here's where history is going. Look at verse 21. "As I looked, this horn," this is a picture of leadership and power in the world, "made war with the saints," and that's ramping up for our little corner of the world here. The opposition. We talked about rejection and ridicule



and restriction and retaliation and retribution. All of that is moving in progressive ways and it's already happening around the world, all the way to retribution and retaliation. Christians are suffering at the hands of the powers that be in our world.

And they win and they "prevailed over them," the saints, the people of God, they seem to lose. I mean, guess who didn't get beat on that day in Acts 5? All the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel went away and had lunch. The disciples had their back filleted open. The Sanhedrin prevailed. It seemed like they prevailed. I love this word, verse 22 in English, "until," it's just a matter of time. You're going to be on the right side of history eventually, "until the Ancient of Days came." And he's coming, that's the whole point of Christianity. There's a coming kingdom.

"And judgment was given for the saints of the Most High." Here's the principle of vindication. There's going to be a judgment that says you were right after all people. I often illustrate it with David, who was in the caves of Adullam and hiding in the Judean desert from Saul, who was in charge and had all the armies. He was really the king in God's eyes, David was, but Saul was reigning and he had all the armies and all the accolades and was collecting all the taxes. And yet there was a group, it says, of malcontents, people in debt, kind of the fringe and dregs of society that saw David for who he really was. And they went out to him in the cave of Adullam and they hung out and hid in the shadows saying, "This is the real king." And one day, guess what? He ascended the throne. Saul was deposed. He's dead on Mount Gilboa. David eventually marches into Jerusalem and all those malcontents were vindicated. Judgment was given to those people who stood there faithfully in allegiance to David, and so it is one day "The Ancient of Days is going to come and judgment will be given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom."

I want to be on the right side of history. You want to pander to the world and accept their sexual ethics? Fine, you're free to do that, but you're stupid. You really are. You want to go say that all religions are the same and pluralism in your mind is not just saying I have the right to debate you about the truthfulness of Christianity, but pluralism in your mind is saying, I have to affirm that they're right, that everybody's right. You can do that but you'd be really dumb. Really dumb. You can say a lot of things that will echo the world's philosophy, but you would be a fool because the Ancient of Days is coming and he is going to establish his kingdom and the word in Daniel 2 is he's going to shatter the kingdoms.

It's one thing to state it, as we often do from the book of Revelation and Handel's Messiah, "The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." Jesus is going to be in charge. But "become" is such a weak word. Daniel 2 is he's going to "shatter the kingdoms of the world." You have read the book of Revelation, right? Jesus, I mean, that's not gentle Jesus, meek and mild there in the book of Revelation. This is going to be a rough go. This transition of kingdom is not going to be an easy one. And so it is that we stand back and say, when the Ancient of Days here in Daniel Chapter 7 comes, he's going to vindicate his people. If you stand in allegiance to Christ, you will be vindicated. And that's a good thing because I fear being on the wrong side of history.



Everyone has got a very different definition, one is based on people's desires, the other is based on the prophetic word of God that has been established throughout the generations, vindicated through prophetic fulfillment. I sit here with the revealed text of Scripture saying I'm going to stand with where this says history is going. Where history is going is Christ ascending a throne. And those who have been faithful to him, who obey him, as it said in Acts Chapter 5 verse 32, those are the people who will be vindicated.

So I fear the cost of not being on the right side of history, to put it that way or to put it in terms of what I put on the screen, to be disloyal to Christ. I don't want to be disloyal to Christ. Even with this whole COVID thing, some people are saying, "Man, I got a real conscience problem with what you church people are doing, you leaders. You keep on doing stuff. I don't know, putting people in harm's way."

Listen, I don't have a conscience problem about what we're doing. I have a conscience problem about what we're not doing. I stay up at night going, I wonder really if when the Scripture says, "You ought not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some, but you ought to be doing it all the more as you see the day approaching," and even look in the 1st century and they're meeting from house to house every day. I'm not concerned we have too much programming going on, I'm concerned we don't have enough programming going on. I'm concerned we're not studying the Bible together enough. Is there risk involved? Sure, I got that. Are we going to be stupid? No. Dude, you're here in a parking lot, right? I mean, we're doing what we can. But this is more important, as we've said so many times, than you sitting on a patio and eating your Mexican food at your favorite restaurant. Way more important. This is way more important than anything else you could do. Buying a garden hose this afternoon, going to Costco. This is important and so is your home fellowship group and so is your discipleship appointment.

I fear the cost of being disloyal to Christ because one day God's revealed word will be the standard for our Bema Seat evaluation, it's called the Judgment of Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ. I'd like him to say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He's not going to say how well did you get along with that culture that hated me?

Count the cost of allegiance to Christ, fear the cost of disloyalty to Christ. Gamaliel was toying with that concept and we ought to understand that concept. But please go back to Acts Chapter 5 and look at these last two verses. How good is this? Here they were after all of that, beaten and bloodied. And it says after being beaten, it says "They left the presence of the council, rejoicing, rejoicing that they were counted worthy," I'm glad I could be the one who could "suffer dishonor for the name." That's not how most people think. And then they said, we're just going to get at it. "And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease," it's exactly what the government didn't want them to do, "they didn't cease from teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

Number three, and it couldn't be any simpler than this, we need to gladly, gladly, that's the keyword "Pay Any Price for Christ's sake," whatever it might be. If we get in trouble, if we get whipped, we get beaten, we get imprisoned, we get executed. I want to be able to say with



the early Church, "I will be glad to be counted worthy, to suffer dishonor for the name." I know you've already suffered some, right, you have to. I mean, if you've told your friends you're a Christian, there are some of your friends who didn't like that. If you've told your family members, I'm going to do what God asked me to do. You're going to suffer some reproach, some ridicule. But as it ramps up to you breaking restrictions or you actually standing there and having to endure the retaliation and retribution of a culture, I just wonder if we can do it gladly.

Because I recognize my love for God, my supreme love for God, is something that says if you hate him and he's not here for you to aim your hostility at, you can aim it at us. I'd be honored to stand in for Christ. "Stand in for Christ, that sounds unbiblical." It's not, Colossians Chapter 1 puts it this way. Paul says, I am glad, I'm happy. Right? I'm fine "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." What? Lacking in Christ's afflictions? You start talking about stuff that's lacking in Christ, you're like, "I don't think anything is lacking in Christ." You're right. When he died on the cross, he said it is finished. The afflictions that saved us, the propitiation of the punishment we deserved, all that was done in full.

What wasn't done in full was the hatred of the world toward God and his agenda. The point is now Jesus isn't here for them to hate. We're left here. So we're the stand-in. Paul says they can afflict me... Matter of fact, jot this down, Galatians Chapter 6. At the end of Galatians, Chapter 6 verse 17, Paul's dealing with problems inside the church, the churches of Galatia, and he says this. "Don't let anyone give me trouble." I mean, it's like he throws up his hands. You can see him here. This old, you know, apostle who's been through so much, he says, "don't let anyone give me trouble." And that seems like an arrogant thing to say. But then he says this, "For I bear in my body the marks of Christ." What are you talking about? What are you talking about?

The apostles in Acts 5 got whipped, probably 40 lashes minus one, because the Jewish people were the ones administering that and that's what the rabbis talked about. They probably got whipped 39 times apiece. Paul, as he talks to the Corinthians, says, "I got whipped 40 times minus one lash five times" in my ministry career. I just wonder if he's about to take a swim in the river and you're one of his friends like Silas or Timothy, and he takes his cloak off and turns to walk into the river and you're looking at his bareback, I wonder what his back looks like. He's been whipped by governmental officials five times in his ministry. Do you think he had some scars on his back?

He said, listen, "Don't give me trouble in the church, I've got enough trouble in the world. Look at my back. I bear the marks of Christ." This is not some strange stigmata, if you know anything about that. That's not what we're talking about here. It's not like magical marks of the crucifixion spots of Christ on his hands and feet. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about him saying I have filled up the afflictions of Christ in my ministry. I've taken so many hits from the world. It's just one of his arguments at the end of Galatians. Just don't hassle me in this. Just do what I'm telling you to do.



And all I'm telling you is the hostility toward Christ hasn't stopped. Satan still hates Christ. The problem is Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. But guess who's still vulnerable as Satan walks around here on the earth and capturing people to do his will in this world. And the spiritual battle rages. All that's left are his kids. It's us. And so we're going to be the target. And just like there are probably human beings in your life who are here in the flesh in this earth that you said I'd take a bullet for them, here are the apostles going, "I'm fine, I will take that. You hate Christ then you can hate me. I'm honored to be hated by you. I'm honored to be whipped by you. I'm honored for you to execute me. You want to put the noose around my neck, you want to burn me at the stake, you want to kill me, you want to shoot me, decapitate me? OK, I would be honored if your hatred is toward Christ and I'm suffering as a Christian."

One of the small group questions I'll ask you, as I'm sure. Go to First Peter 4, I assume I'm going to take you there on the discussion questions, I can't remember. But all of that is about me saying I will rejoice in being a stand-in for your hatred toward Christ. I mean, don't you, I mean, would your daughter, if someone hates your daughter are you going to go, "Well then I want to be your friend." No. "If you want to hate her, you hate me. And she's not here for you to hate or throw something at, you can throw it at me." Because that's how tight I'll stand in allegiance to someone I love. The Bible says, my love for Christ, ought to be greater than anybody in my family.

"They left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day" they just doubled down "in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching in the name of Christ." This will all be rewarded, you understand that. Jesus said when they ridicule you and they mock you and they spurn your name as evil, you ought to rejoice in that day. That's a good thing. Not because we're gluttons for punishments or masochistic, but because you know what, they hate us for doing what Christ asked us to do. They hate us for the message that we're bearing in this world, which is all a message that Christ asked us to bring.

This is a great text of Scripture, and I hope it motivates you. But the emotional response in the text as bad as this is, it's about suffering, is my fear of God is such, it should be at least, that I am willing to gladly incur whatever price must be paid to be faithful to him in my generation. That should lead us to joy. It's funny, we've seen a lot of emotions in the book of Acts. You've seen them in Acts Chapter 2 feel bad. They're cut to the heart. They're grieving, and sorrow, according to Second Corinthians Chapter 7, it leads to repentance. Right? You can't have repentance without sorrow. You hear the message and you feel bad that you're a sinner, that your sins put Christ on the cross. Those who reject that message, like the council here in Acts 5, they're angry, they're mad. You got some who are sad when they first become Christians and you got the opposition to Christianity, they're mad and then we finally get a passage where the people are glad and they're glad in the midst of their pain.

You got people in regret over their sins coming to repentance. You got people enraged because they're rebelling against the truth. And now you got people who are rejoicing. Think about that. Because they stand with Christ and they're willing to bear whatever reproach we might have to bear in our generation, in their generation.



I know this is kind of a heavy message as we kick off this Christmas season. But I do want you to think about that very simple question, "who would you die for?" And to know to love Christ is to be able to say, no matter what is demanded of me, I will pay it. But I'd like you to resonate with that one word "gladly." They rejoiced. It's worth it, it's good, we'll be vindicated, we may be here in the cave of Adullam. But our king who is despised by our culture will one day ascend the throne, the Ancient of Days will come. There will be judgment for the saints and the saints will inherit the kingdom. We know we'll be vindicated. Don't be discouraged, don't grow weary. Be willing to pay the price for obedience to Christ.

Let's pray. God, we need your strength. We need the resolve that this passage is clearly calling for by way of example, we want to be like those apostles who though their bodies were in pain and they were paying a penalty of people I'm sure they would love to have respect from, they would love to have teachers of the law, these seminary graduates saying, "Man, you guys are doing a good thing," when instead they were enraged at them. They would like to be invited to a lunch at a special restaurant in Jerusalem, but instead they're being whipped at their command, beaten.

And yet in all of that, God, even though they didn't get what they wanted in the temple realm, they knew spiritually they were standing with you and therefore they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer reproach and shame for the name of Christ. May we be there, not that we want it. Not that we're looking for it. Not that we're walking into it on purpose. Because we love you so much that we're willing to put you first in our lives. So God, encourage us, emboldened us, double our resolve even this morning as we think about the depth of our commitment to you.

In Jesus name. Amen.