

Esteeming the Reproach of Christ

Hebrews 11:26

How could Moses esteem the reproach of Christ, when Christ was born two thousand years later?

The reason is because there has always been only one way for man to be reconciled to God since Adam and Eve fell into sin. As soon as our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden God shed the blood of animals to make a covering for them, to cover their shame.

This was a picture of what Christ would do for sinners. He suffered and died to cover or wash away our sins.

The Old Testament Saints were not saved by the law for the law cannot justify or make anyone righteous in the sight of God. Paul said that the law was simply a schoolmaster that shows us our sin and need for a Saviour.

Therefore, All O.T. Saints understood that Christ would come and redeem His people from their sins- they believed in Christ with all their hearts.

By faith Moses looked for the same heavenly city as Abraham (11:10) and the other patriarchs (11:16). Their example reminds us of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Faith's eye sees not only the present but especially the future. Faith's wisdom calculates not only the beginning but especially the ending.

Hebrews chapter 11 is rightly called the "Hall of Faith." Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David are just some of the godly names that we find mentioned in this chapter. And they shared a common faith in Jesus Christ that was constantly under attack.

Using these many Old Testament Saints as examples of perseverance and steadfastness, Paul wrote to encourage Hebrew Christians who were experiencing their own religious persecution.

We read about their intense trials in Hebrews 10:33, "Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."

Historians tell us it was not an uncommon thing for the early Christians to be plundered. This was doubtless a part of the "afflictions" to which the apostle refers in this case. The meaning is, that they yielded their property not only without resistance, but with joy.

They, in common with all the early Christians, counted it a privilege and honour to suffer in the cause of their Master. Men may be brought to such a state of mind as to part with their property with joy. It is not usually the case; but Christ will enable a man to do it.

How can believers part with temporal possessions?

We have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Better than any earthly possession, and more permanent.

The treasure laid up in heaven is worth more to a man than all the wealth of the world. It will give him more solid peace and comfort. It gives more comfort-
-it makes a man really richer.

It is more enduring. Property here soon vanishes. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or at any rate all that we possess must soon be left.

But in heaven all is permanent and secure. No calamity of war, pestilence or famine; no change of times; no failure of a crop, or a bank; no fraud of swindlers can take it away; nor does death ever come there to remove the inhabitants of heaven from their "mansions."

With this hope, therefore, Christians may cheerfully see their earthly wealth vanish, for they can look forward to their enduring and their better inheritance.

Indeed, heaven is a place of great value and interest to the Christian. But notice what Paul encourages the Saints to greatly value in Hebrews 11:26, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

The Christian enjoys a wealth that exceeds the riches of the world. This treasure doesn't consist in silver and gold but in something far more precious.

It is esteeming the reproach of Christ. And that is the title of my message for today, *Esteeming the Reproach of Christ*. We must esteem the reproach of Christ. What does the reproach of Christ refer to? Who esteems the reproach of Christ?

There are three observations I would like to make from the text that will answer these questions.

1. The reproach of Christ refers to the Cross.

The word for *reproach* means to defame, find fault in a way that demeans another, disgrace, insult.

The idea in some biblical contexts is that the insult or reviling represents unjustifiable verbal abuse inflicted on someone.

In other contexts it describes justifiable disgrace or reproach.

For example we read in Romans 15:3, “ For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”

Christ was reproached and reviled without cause. He was the Spotless Lamb of God. There was no fault found in the Lord Jesus.

The reproach he experienced from the hands of sinners was unjustifiable.

Christ was willing to suffer reproach and contempt in order to do good to others. He endured rejection and contempt all his life, from those who by their lips and lives reproached their Maker.

We see the kindness of the Lord Jesus in being willing to throw himself between the sinner and God.

He intercepted, as it were, our sins, and bore the effects of them on the Cross.

He stood between us and God; and both the reproaches and the Divine displeasure due to them, met on his sacred Person, and produced the sorrows of the atonement--his bitter agony in the garden and on the cross.

Jesus thus showed his love of God in being willing to bear the reproaches aimed at him; and his love to men in being willing to endure the sufferings necessary to atone for these very sins. Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus. So boundless and so free!!

If Jesus thus bore reproaches, we should be willing also to endure them. This was the message of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrew Christians who were suffering because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We suffer in the cause where he has gone before us, and where he has set us the example; and as he was abused and vilified, we should be willing to be so also.

Another way in which the word *reproach* is used in the N.T. is justifiable disgrace or reproach.

For example we read in I Timothy 3:7, “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Lest he fall into reproach. That is, in such a way as to bring dishonour on the ministerial character. His life will be such as to give men occasion to reproach the cause of Christ.

The “reproach of Christ” in Hebrews 11:26 means Christ’s reproach. That scoffing and mockery which Christ endured, and which His faithful followers still endure, was anticipated by the godly long before Christ was born.

Such reproach, the reproach of the Cross, was wealth to Moses, far greater than anything Egypt and its royalty could supply. What a lesson for believers today!

“Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For ’twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He’ll call me some day to my home far away,
Where His glory forever I’ll share.”

The reproach of Christ refers to the Cross.

2. The world despises the Cross of Christ.

Why is the Cross such a reproach to the world?

An explanation is given by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

We who are Christian preachers make Christ crucified the grand subject of our instructions and our aims, contrary from the Jew and the Greek.

We glory only in *Christ crucified*. The word Christ, the Anointed, is the same as the Hebrew name Messiah. The emphasis in this expression is on the word crucified.

The Jews would make the Messiah whom they expected no less an object of glorifying than the apostles, but they spurned the doctrine that he was to be crucified. Yet in that the apostles boasted; proclaiming him crucified, or having been crucified, as the only hope of man.

This must mean more than that Christ was distinguished for moral worth, more than that he died as a martyr; because, if that were all, no reason could be given why the cross should be made so prominent an object.

It must mean that Christ was crucified for the sins of men, as an atoning sacrifice in the place of sinners. "We proclaim a crucified Messiah as the only Redeemer of lost men."

To the Jews a stumbling-block. The Word stumbling-block *skandalon* means, properly, anything in the way over which one may fall; then anything that gives offence, or that causes one to fall into sin, Here it means that, to the Jews, the doctrine that the Messiah was to be crucified gave great offence. The Cross was a scandal to the Jew. It excited, irritated, and exasperated them. They could not endure the doctrine of the Cross, and treated it with scorn.

It is well known that to the Jews no doctrine was more offensive than this, that the Messiah was to be put to death, and that there was to be salvation in no other way. It was so in the times of the apostles, and it has been so since.

The Jews had looked for a magnificent temporal prince; but the doctrine that their Messiah was crucified dashed all their expectations. And they regarded it with contempt and scorn, just in proportion as their hopes had been elevated, and these high expectations cherished.

They had the common feelings of all men, the native feelings of pride and self-righteousness, by which they rejected the doctrine that we are dependent for salvation on one who was crucified.

They regarded Jesus as one given over by God, as having been justly put to death, and the object of the curse of the Almighty. Isaiah 53:4, "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God?"

They endeavoured to convince themselves that he was the object of the Divine wrath; and they, therefore, rejected the doctrine of the cross with the deepest feelings of hatred.

To the Greeks. The term Greek denotes all who were not Jews; thus the phrase, "the Jews and the Greeks," comprehended the whole human family, 1Co 1:22.

The Greeks regarded the Cross of Christ foolishness because they esteemed the whole account as a fable.

It did not accord with their own views of the way of elevating the condition of man.

They saw no efficacy of the doctrine that a man of humble birth was put to death in an ignominious manner in Judea to make men better, or to receive pardon.

They had the common feelings of unregenerate human nature; blind to the beauty of the character of Christ, and blind to the design of his death; and they therefore regarded the whole statement, *Christ crucified*, as folly.

The feelings of the Jews and of the Greeks on this subject, are the common feelings of men today.

Everywhere sinners have the same views of the cross; and everywhere the human heart, if left to itself, rejects it, as either a stumbling-block or as folly.

But the doctrine should be preached, though it is an offence, and though it appears to be folly. It is the only hope of man; and by the preaching of the cross alone can sinners be saved.

The world despises the Cross of Christ. But there is a difference between how the world views the Cross and how God's people view it.

3. Believers esteem the Cross of Christ

The reason why we as believers esteem the Cross is because it is at the Cross that our sins are forgiven and the burden of our hearts roll away. We are justified before God at the Cross. The Cross means everything to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

The word for esteeming pictures one giving careful thought to something and not making a quick decision.

In Hebrews 11:26 it pictures Moses carefully thinking through his decision, weighing out the pros and cons. He weighed what Egypt had to offer in time against what God offered in both time and eternity.

It speaks of a single and resolute act as the result of a decisive esteeming or reckoning by Moses.

There was no turning back for Moses and for all who follow Jesus Christ.

A Bible Commentator says that the word *esteem* denotes a belief resting not on one's inner feeling or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, the weighing and comparing of facts . . . deliberate and careful judgment.

Where do we find those facts? In the Bible. We rest our souls and eternity on the Word of God.

We read in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

That I should glory. That I should boast; or that I should rely on anything else. Others glory in their conformity to a set of moral rules; others in their zeal, or their talents, or their learning, or their orthodoxy; others in their wealth, or their accomplishments; others in their family alliances, and their birth; but the supreme boast and glorying of a Christian is in the cross of Christ.

In Jesus, the crucified Messiah. It is a subject of rejoicing and glorying that we have such a Saviour. The world looked upon him with contempt; and the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek. But to the Christian, that cross is the subject of glorying. It is so because of the fact that it procured for us admission into heaven, a title to the world of glory.

All is glory around the cross. It was a glorious Saviour who died; it was glorious love that led him to die; it was a glorious object to redeem a world; and it is unspeakable glory to which he will raise lost and ruined sinners by his death. Oh, who would not glory in such a Saviour!

Compared with this, what trifles are all the objects in which men usually slave for! And what a lesson is here furnished to the true Christian! Let us not boast of our wealth. It will soon leave us, or we shall be taken from it, and it can aid us little in the great matters that are before us.

It will not ward off disease; it will not enable us to bear pain; it will not smooth the couch of death; it will not save the soul.

Let us not glory in our strength, for it will soon fail; in our beauty, for we shall soon be undistinguished in the corruption of the tomb; in our accomplishments, for they will not save us; in our learning, for it is not that by which we can be brought to heaven.

But let us glory that we have for a Saviour the eternal Son of God--that glorious Being who was adored by the inhabitants of heaven; who made the worlds; who is pure, and lovely, and most holy; and who has undertaken our cause, and died to save us.

I desire no higher honour than to be saved by the Son of God. It is the exaltation of my nature, and shows me more than anything else its true dignity, that one so great and glorious sought my redemption. That cannot be an object of temporary value which he sought by coming from heaven; and if there is any object of real magnitude in this world, it is the soul which the eternal Son of God died to redeem.

Believers esteem the Cross of Christ.

In conclusion, esteeming the reproach of Christ speaks of the Cross. The world despises the Cross of Christ, and tries everything it can to silence the message of Christ crucified. But believers in Christ esteem the Cross because it is the way of salvation, and eternal life. Are you esteeming or despising the Cross of Jesus Christ? Let us always glory in the Cross of Christ and let our message always be to preach Christ crucified! Let us pray.