

# When You're Rejected Because of Christ

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You would think that those who bear the message of this great salvation of which we've been singing, that those who bear testimony to the Christ who is the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, God with us, you would think that those who do not know Christ would welcome them, that there would be a welcome of those who are ambassadors of peace, that there would be a glad reception for those who could tell us about the Savior who alone can rescue us from the coming judgment, but we all know that that's not the case. We know it from Scripture and we also know it from personal experience, that that's not the case, that especially perhaps as a new Christian and you were excited about the things of Christ and went and quickly told people that you knew, you had come to Christ, that you had new life and you wanted to share it with them only to find out that you were met with scorn and rejection and even humiliation at times. Now in our day, even a more insidious form of rejection, just a stone cold indifference to the testimony about Christ. It's a reality which we live with, a reality of persecution as Jesus speaks in Matthew 5, a reality of rejection, a reality of opposition even to our allegiance to Christ. The sad truth of the matter is and knowing so many of you personally, knowing that you feel this personally and that this is the realm in which you live and therefore wanting to linger on this theme just an extra Sunday here this morning, knowing that it often comes at the hands of family, of friends, of people that you love whom your heart yearns after only to see them walk away as if your love meant nothing to them; sometimes at the hands of supposedly fellow believers in Christ who just reject and walk away, never really explaining the reason why, but you are left with your devotion to Christ and a relationship that you long for and yet cannot be reconciled while you hold to your righteousness, while you hold to your Christ, while you hold to your faith and your fidelity in him, while you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and start to realize that there are consequences relationally to that in your life. You know, beloved, I understand that when that happens that you're tempted to flinch, tempted to compromise, tempted to draw back just enough so that the human relationship can be reconciled and yet in your heart you realize, in your conscience you know from the word of God, you understand that compromise is not an option. And once again, once again you are brought to the reality that there is a cost to following Christ and it's not that you mind paying that price, you don't resent Christ because of it. How could you resent the one who gave his blood for the salvation of your soul? So it's not that you resent it but there is that weight of mourning, that weight of sorrow that looks at the rejection that comes from human hands and you feel a sense of grief over it. You grieve over a relationship that you would have and yet they will not.

You see, a Christian, there is such an incongruity here if we could just separate the sin out of the whole dynamic in that. There is an incongruity here. The Christian, those of you that know Christ, you love righteousness. You not only love righteousness, you not only love Christ, you love peace. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they and they alone shall be called sons of God." You long for peace. You love peace. You would have peace with everyone that you could have it with and yet you are met with a stone cold indifference, words of anger, words of rejection, even when peace, blessing and righteousness is the default position of your heart and people walk away from you in your personal life and you are left, it's as if you were on a ship and they had gone to the back of the ship and climbed over the ship and jumped out and you see the ship taking you away as they slowly sink in the wake of a ship, and you lean over, "I didn't want it this way," you say and yet life continues to separate you in a way that brings you sorrow. Beloved, what do you do when you have those earnest sincere desires, not just for Christ but for these loved ones and yet you're met with rejection and when people separate from you? This is one of the most practical questions and one of the most important questions in all of the Christian life because all of a sudden you come face-to-face in a practical way with the intersection of faith and reality of living in a fallen world. You come face-to-face with the fact that allegiance to Christ bears a human cost sometimes. And how is it, how is it that you find the courage, the fortitude, the strength, that is necessary to maintain that proper allegiance to Christ? How is it that you find comfort for the weight of your heart in those times when people who you thought were your loved ones walk away without a word, walk away perhaps with a parting shot that makes it clear that you were paying a price for following Christ?

I want to go back to this theme once more this morning, this theme of the glory of persecution, because what you need to understand, there are two things that I think that we could say about it. One is that this is the realm of discipleship to Christ. This is the realm of following him. This is the reality of salvation. And at the same time, we realize that as we follow Christ, that this is no intellectual matter, not only an intellectual matter, I should say, but you realize when you think through what Scripture says about this – oh, beloved – when you look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, you realize that you are following a Savior who not only, as it were, brings you into that cost of rejection, you have a Savior who understands that cost because he himself experienced it in the flesh. And what's more, you have a Savior who sympathizes with you as you pay the cost and all of a sudden the rejection, the persecution, the cost that you pay for Christ, turns into something which is very sweet, something very dear to your heart. And if you are in that realm today where you have paid a relational cost for fidelity to Christ for you to realize that in a special sense there is a manner in which the doors of intimacy with your Savior have been opened to you in a way that you wouldn't find any other way, we want to talk about that today just to rehearse some things before we move on in the Sermon on the Mount.

Turn to Matthew 5 with me. I want to give you four principles, four thoughts, four comforts in the midst of that that would give you what you need, not only to dry the tears but that your heart would be elevated, that your affections would be warmed to Christ all

the more, and that as we sing in the hymn, that the things of this earth would grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. We all need this, beloved, because this world is a hard place for Christians to walk through and so what do we do? What do we think about? What is the comfort for our soul in the midst of persecution and rejection for the sake of Christ?

First of all, what you need to do is you need to remember the reality of your salvation. You need to remember the reality of your salvation and really, in one sense, what we're going to do here this morning is that we're going to talk about what it means to be a Christian and what the whole purpose of the Christian life in this world is. It is at that level, at that macro fundamental level of understanding why Christ saved you and what that means for you, it is at that level alone that you can find the comfort that you need. You know, I can't stand up here and promise you that there is reconciliation in that human relationship. It could be that the months of sorrow and heartache that you have experienced for some that has brought you even to this church, I can't promise you that that human aspect of it is going to go away. Sometimes people just won't have you while you cling to Christ. So we're not promising something here that we can't deliver on. What I can promise you is the presence of Christ, the sympathy of Christ, the love of Christ in the midst of that rejection, and that the sweetness of Christ which sustains you even if the humans never call back and ask the ship to come back and get back on board.

First of all, beloved, you remember the reality of your salvation. Look at Matthew 5:3. Jesus, as we've said many times, is describing the repentant life. He is describing life in the kingdom. He is describing what it means to live life in the kingdom of grace under his Lordship, under his kingship, and he says in verse 3 as he speaks to you personally through his word here this morning, Matthew 5, he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And in verse 10 he says, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." You start, beloved, in the midst of that rejection, you start by stepping back and remembering the whole fundamental nature of who you are and what your life is now when you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, to be a Christian means that there has been a change of ownership. Christ now owns you, not the world. Christ now sets the terms of life. Christ now establishes the parameters of your existence. Christ now, beloved, take refuge in this, Christ now is delivering the circumstances of your life, of your relationships, and he is orchestrating that to accomplish his will.

You belong to a different King and the people who are outside the kingdom, don't recognize the authority of that King. They don't have your affection for that King and so naturally when you become someone alien to them, there is a pushback to that. What you must do, beloved, where your comfort lies, where your encouragement to persevere resides, is in realizing the dynamic that brings this about. You say, "Ah, yes, I should expect this. I didn't see it coming through that person or through that relationship, I didn't anticipate it coming there but I remember that I belong to a different kingdom and therefore there will be sparks when that kingdom intersects with the world in which I live." And where does that world in which you live manifest itself? In your relationships. In those that are closest to you.

You see, beloved, the reason that you can rejoice when this happens to you, the reason that you can find comfort, the reason that Christ could say God bless you, as it were, that you are under the hand, under the favor of God when this happens to you, why could that be? It's because, beloved – oh, remember this and all will be well with your soul – when that happens, you remember that Christ has claimed you as his own; that Christ appointed you for salvation before the foundation of the world; that Christ when he went to the cross in order to die for sinners had you in mind by name; that you were not just part of a glob of humanity and Christ hopes that maybe you'll come to him. No, that's a false view of the atonement. Christ went to the cross in order to save you by name. Christ loved you before the foundation of the world. Christ purchased you by name at the cross. Christ by name and by the Holy Spirit, worked in your life and brought you to new life and imparted new life to you. Why? Because he would have you as his own and by a sovereign exertion of his prerogative and will he saved you in order to belong to him.

Beloved, when that kind of rejection comes to you and you're feeling the pain of it, look up. Look vertically. Look at where the source of the cost comes and realize that the Son of God shed his blood for the remission of your sins; that the Son of God gladly gave himself in a perfectly righteous life that your sins might be washed away by his blood, that his righteousness might be counted to your account so that before God you had a perfect condition, a perfect standing before God that could never be taken away, that cannot be improved upon by your good works, that cannot be diminished by your sins and failures. Christ purchased you and gave you the full benefits of his righteousness and shed blood so that you could belong to him and be in a secure relationship with God forever and ever, amen. That's why you're paying that price relationally on a human level. That's the reality of your salvation.

Well, beloved, what you need to do is remember that when it comes and not simply descend and kind of sink into the human reactions and the anger, the bitterness or the rejection or the sorrow or whatever you're feeling, to remember and come back and look up and let Christ, as it were, pick you up again by the wonder of the salvation that he has given to you by remembering in the midst of that that there is no more war with God in your soul because Christ has made peace with you. You have a surpassing peace, a surpassing reconciliation, that transcends eternally in value any earthly relationship that you might have, and you realize the surpassing worth, the surpassing greatness, the surpassing value of Christ as the whole book of Hebrews teaches us. Better than angels. Better than the Old Testament system. Better than the Old Testament priests. You have a Christ, you have a Savior, you have a High Priest who took you under his wing like a mother hen taking a stray chick under its wing and saying, "You'll be mine and I'll protect you and I'll keep you," and you rest in the security of that. You rest in the fact that there is no doubt about his intentions for you. You realize that there is no defect whatsoever in your status before God. Not because of you and your merit or your good works, all because of the goodness and righteousness of Christ.

So, beloved, when the world wages war against you, when people in authority make you pay a price, when people close to you reject you for a stand for righteousness or because

of your testimony to Christ, you say to yourself this, beloved, "The world may war against me but I have peace with my God. I have peace with my Christ. And that is worth more to me than 10,000 worlds. That is worth more to me than the vault at Fort Knox," if that place still has gold. I don't know, it's just a cliché at this point, isn't it? "But to have Christ, to have his preeminence, and to have his love in my life, to be redeemed by him, to belong to him and to know that that is a security that is mine forever and ever into all of the ages of eternity to come," you say, "Ah, I remember the reality of my salvation and that is worth far more to me than any earthly relationship whatsoever." And you rest in that. And maybe as you're resting in that, maybe as you're counting the cost in sweet joy toward Christ and in sorrow toward the human situation, you wipe the tears off of your eyes, but as you are wiping them off, you're saying, "I belong to Christ in a way that is superior to anything that happens to me here on earth and I love him and I find my hope, my security, my confidence and my consolation in him." That's what you do. You remember the reality of your salvation and then you give thanks to Christ.

There is a second thing that you do and at the risk of repeating a little bit of what I said last week but, you know, I think it bears repeating because it's too valuable, it's too important to just do a touch and go landing with an airplane and you touch on something that is so eternally significant and then you fly off into another direction. Well, I realize, I know that this is too important for your souls. As a pastor, I know that this really really matters, that it is here, it is in this fertile soil that the roots of your spiritual life can grow. So, yeah, I'm going to take a little bit of extra time to cultivate that soil so that it flourishes for you. And when I know some of the harsh things that have been said against you, so many of you, by people close to you, you bet I'm going to slow down and give that which I know would encourage your soul.

Secondly, not only remember the reality of your salvation, remember the reward of your salvation. Remember the reward of your salvation. These things are all just so precious and sweet to you, precious and sweet to me, and this is the sweet word of Christ coming to us, Christ coming to us through his word, saying, exercising his sovereign prerogative over the church, exercising the endless love and compassion that he has on his people, giving us that which would encourage us because he understands that we pay a price for following him; he understands that this world brings us sorrow and he gives us that which surpasses it in comfort and consolation. Bless his holy name.

So look at what he says in verse 11 of Matthew 5, he says, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Ah, rejoice and be glad. The reward in heaven is great. Frankly, I don't think that there is any greater reward than the privilege, that coming moment when you and I will look face-to-face into the countenance of Christ and then we will see, then we will have fuller understanding, then we will have a greater appreciation of the price that he paid for us, of the love that he has for us, of the lengths that he went to in order to secure our eternal well-being. Beloved, when that day comes, the reward, the joy, the blessing, the peace, the exaltation and the exultation will be so massive. It will be exponentially greater than all of the combined joys that you've had in

this life, so much so that the joys of this life will not be worthy to be compared to being in his presence, and being in his presence will surpass exponentially geometrically far beyond any price that you paid for Christ here in this life. Don't you understand that? Don't you realize that? Don't you believe that? Well, beloved, I know that you do, so it's my privilege as I speak here this morning simply to remind you of that which you already love, which you already believe, which you already possess, and to call to mind that you were, as it were, that you would draw upon that future deposit, that future reward that is yours, to draw upon it and cash it in now that it might be that which would encourage your heart through the relationships of those who reject you.

Oh beloved, oh beloved, these are the most precious things that we have and I want to tell you, beloved, that soon enough, soon enough, you'll leave the conflict behind. Soon enough, the pain of disrupted relationships will be over and you'll enter into the joy of your Master. And when we enter into the joy of our Master, beloved, based on the authority of God's word, I can promise you without fear of contradiction that whether it's the trumpet that calls us or whether it's the passing through this life and death and entering into the presence of Christ, beloved, whenever that moment comes for you, you will step in and draw your first breath of the purified air of the kingdom of God, so to speak, and you will instantly know that, "I'm home. This is where I belong." And when you're home with Christ, the conflicts will be over, and what Christ purchased you for will be consummated, never to be taken away. Your reward in heaven is very great so soon enough, you'll leave the conflict behind. Soon enough, Christ our brother will confess us before the Father and own us gladly in the presence of the holy unseen God; immortal, invisible, God-only wise and you'll belong to him.

Look over at Matthew 10 just to give you another hook to hang your spiritual coat on, so to speak, that you will not be lost by Christ; that in the presence of God he will own you. In fact, let's step back in Matthew 10:28. Jesus goes to the uttermost of the worst that the world can do to you and what does he say to you? He speaks words to give you courage, to give you hope, to give you peace, to give you fortitude that says, "I will stand like a man for Christ no matter what the opposition may be. Even if it grieves my heart to see relationships falter and fracture because of my commitment to Christ, I will be unmoved." That's what Christ is doing here.

Matthew 10:28, he says, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." Jesus says that God knows the sparrow. His eye is on the sparrow, in response to which you say, "And I know he watches me. And he watches me with a sense of love, with a sense of grace that is on my life that is of greatly more value because Christ didn't die for sparrows, Christ didn't die for the animal kingdom, Christ died for his people, and the measure of his love and the measure that he loves us is shown by the measure of the cost which he willingly paid." And to Christ it was a joy, as it were, to endure the shame of the cross in order that he might call many brethren unto himself.

Not ashamed to call you brethren. Why? Because his Father is your Father as well. You're more valuable than many sparrows so don't be afraid. Don't flinch. Don't despair.

And he goes on and he says in verse 32 there in Matthew 10, he says, "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." To openly name the name of Christ even in the midst of opposition, even in the midst of rejection, to cling to him in all of your futile failing strength, is to realize that his strong arm of omnipotence has laid hold of you never to let go; that he will keep you and that the time will come when he will openly confess you in the courts of heaven and say, "This is one for whom I died." So you remember the reward of your salvation. Soon enough, beloved, you will be free from sin. Soon enough, you'll be freed from the conflict. Soon enough, you'll be glorified in his presence.

It's too wonderful for words, isn't it? These are things too magnificent for tongue to tell. Who is adequate to give the proper due to explain these things fully and to speak of them, of the reverence and holiness and joy with which they deserve? Who is worthy of that? Who can do that? Ah, but beloved, it's what the word of God tells us, that the reward of your salvation is great. And beloved, remember this and let it draw you closer to Christ and to elevate your affections for him, strengthen your loyalty to him, and move the motions of your heart so that there is unrestrained love for him. Oh, beloved, let it do that work in your heart because that great reward of which we have spoken is yours despite your sin, despite your inadequacy, despite your prayerlessness, despite your faltering steps for Christ, despite the many ways that you've sinned and compromised. Christ covered it all. Christ paid it all and says, "Yes, I see that sin. I see that you're not worthy but I," Christ says, Christ is worthy and Christ bestows his worthiness on you so that you have a status that is fit for the presence of a holy God. And this gift of salvation, this reward of belonging to him, is yours apart from your deserving of it. That's grace. That's great. That's great grace.

So in the midst of the rejection, you remember the reality of your salvation and you remember the reward of your salvation and, beloved, it strengthens you. Look down at the end of Matthew 10. We really need to just sit down and dwell on this because having spoken of his intention to openly confess us before the Father, he helps us see that there is a human line, there is a thin human line of cost that is paid for those blessings. He says in verse 34, "Don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." He goes on to say, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it," ah but beloved, here's the blessedness in which we live, "he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." You see, as Jesus is talking about these great themes of the love of God, talking about these great themes of the reward of salvation and we have this great promise of seeing him face-to-face, as he teaches us that, he simultaneously tells us, informs us in advance, comforts us with the knowledge that says, "Sometimes, beloved, there will be a human price to pay. There will be a relational

cost to your devotion to me." And he sets the bar high and Christ says, "I am worth paying that price." Christ says, "If you would walk away from me for the sake of preserving a human relationship, you're not worthy of me. You don't belong to me." By choosing the world over Christ, you testify to which realm that you still belong to.

But not for you, beloved. Not for those of you that are in Christ. You know the value of Christ. You know something of the value of his blood. You love him for having saved you. You love him for having secured your eternal future. You love him for his presence. You love him as your Shepherd. You love him as your King. You love him in all of the manifest offices that he bears toward you: prophet, priest and king, author of the word of God, sender of the Holy Spirit. And you say, "Oh, he has given me so much. Nothing in this world could ever attract me away from Christ." In light of the surpassing value of the gift and in light of your diametrically opposed deserving of it, meaning the gift is great and your deserving is nonexistent and that yet Christ has done this, you remember the reward and the reality of your salvation and you find comfort for your heart.

Friends, do you know Christ? Do you belong to him like this or has Christ simply been a matter of occasional church attendance to you maybe? Maybe a thought that, "Yeah, I should do right by my fellow man"? Beloved, that's not real Christianity at all. Wipe it away. Push it off of the desk. Throw it into the wastebasket and toss it out because that's not the real thing. The question is: have you turned to Christ in your sinfulness in order to have him save you and to belong to him? Have you trusted in his shed blood? Have you responded to his invitation that says, "Come to me all you who are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"? Have you come to him in response to his command revealed in his word? Have you come to him on his terms which says, "I leave the world behind. I discount the value of my life. I deny myself. I deny any righteousness of my own. I come alone and I come naked, as it were, to the cross and say, 'Christ save me, O resurrected King.'" Have you come to him like that to be delivered from sin, to be delivered from yourself and to belong wholly and entirely to him, having no others? I invite you to him if you don't know him. Come to this Christ because these blessings of which we spoke he freely gives to everyone who believes. You should come to him. That's what you should do. You should flee to him. "Christ, make me one of your own based on the things that I've heard here this morning."

Well, Christian, let's go back and build in you even more of those things that would sustain you in the midst of rejection and persecution. You remember the reality of your salvation, what Christ has done, the possessions that are yours now spiritually in him. You remember the reward of your salvation, that there are far better things yet to come. Thirdly, and this is where the doors of intimacy, as it were, kind of fling open, and in this, beloved, in this you see Christ in a new way. Having paid a cost of your own, you look back and you look into Scripture and you understand something about Christ and his earthly life. You see it with new spectacles, with new glasses. You see it from a new perspective. You see it with a clarity that maybe you didn't before. You see his life and then you realize what that means in terms of how he views you in your suffering, your rejection, your persecution, the loss that you have paid for the sake of following Christ. What do you do? Thirdly, you remember the sympathy of Christ. Remember the



sympathy of Christ. So have men rejected you for the sake of Christ? Have you been despised for the name? Have you been isolated and alone? Perhaps in times past you can remember looking back, times where you had to step out of a worldly environment or step out from amongst people who really had nothing to do with Christ and you had to step out and you stepped out alone and you stepped out not knowing what the event would be, not knowing what the consequences would be, but you stepped out because you knew that that's what loyalty to Christ required. Well, beloved, as you stand alone like that, remember the sympathy of Christ. Remember that you follow a Christ who himself was despised and rejected by men.

Look at Isaiah 53. Christian, are you mocked? Are you rejected? Has a wall of silence fallen over a relationship that you once held dear for the sake of Christ, for the sake of righteousness? Oh, then draw near to Christ today. Draw near to this one whom Isaiah prophetically said in Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." Do you feel alone for Christ? Well, you're not really alone, are you? Christ is with you. He said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Your brothers and sisters in Christ are with you. But I know that there is that sense in a relationship that's particularly near to your heart and the isolation is there and even as you remember these other realities, there is still a spot in your heart that says, "This is lonely. This is hard. This is a cost that it seems like no one else can understand." Ah, beloved, but then go back when you feel that way, go back to Christ and realize that Christ really was alone for the sake of obedience to the Father. He was alone on that cross. He was despised and rejected by those who were at the foot of the cross, mocking him, spitting on him, delighting in the spectacle of his spilled blood. Alone. And realize that you're not alone. That you have a Savior who understands something of what that's like. In fact, he understands far more about it than you do. He has drunk more deeply from that cup than you ever will. And you go to him and you say, "Christ, I see it afresh now. I see your solitary punishment that you bore on my behalf with no one there to support you, no one there to encourage you," in a human sense, "and yet you went all the way through. You know."

Remember something also, beloved, of his earthly life; that Christ knows something about those yearnings for people who will not have you. Christ knew that more deeply in his earthly human life and Scripture records it for us. Beloved, and we'll go there for a passage in a moment, a couple of passages, remember that Christ knew that he was coming to a world that would reject him. He knew what lay ahead. The rejection was inevitable. And yet we read Scripture and find that it still grieved him, it still touched his heart, it still affected him.

Look at Matthew 23 and you get a window into the earnest desires of Christ, the sincerity of the offer of the Gospel going out to all men, and we see that the root of rejection is not found in the attitude of Christ, it is alone in the attitudes of men who reject him. Matthew 23:37, it's a poignant passage, in verse 37 he looks out over the city and he cries out, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under

her wings, and you were unwilling." He says, "I would have spread my wings over you but you refused. So many times I would have had you. So many times I would have welcomed you if you'd only come but you wouldn't. You refused. You stood apart. You distanced yourself from my love and from the invitation of the Gospel. So many times." And to Jerusalem he says, "Now it's too late. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"

What I would have you see here in the context of which we are speaking here today, beloved, is this, is that Christ yearned for those who wouldn't have him. Christ sympathizes therefore and understands from his own earthly experience what it is like for you to yearn after a relationship and people will not have you. People will not have you because of your association with Christ, because of your commitment to righteousness, because you won't go with them in the same kind of excess that they knew you for before you were saved. And you say, "I would have you. I would give my love. I would give of myself freely to you." "No," is the response. And humanly speaking and in the sense of human love and compassion you, "Oh, oh, that hurts." At that point of hurt, beloved, don't give into the despair, don't get your feelings hurt, don't be angry, don't retaliate, don't do any of those things. Go immediately to Christ and say, "Lord, you understand what this is like. You wanted to gather them like chicks and they said no."

Look over at Luke 13. You see, there's a sympathy that Christ has with us. Christ doesn't merely appoint these sorrows for us to walk through as part of the platform that he gives us to glorify his name with our earthly lives. He doesn't just appoint it and then step back, fold his arms across his chest and say, "Let's see how you deal with that one." That's not the spirit of our Lord at all. He understands with sympathy, with consolation. He receives you when you bring the sorrow to him.

Look at Luke 13:34. Once again, Christ says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!" All I want you to see is the desire that Christ expresses that was in his own heart toward a stubborn rebellious people who would not have him. He said, "I wanted it. I wanted you to be with me but you said no. Understand," as he speaks to Jerusalem, "understand that the responsibility and the culpability of that is on you. You will bear the consequences of your own sinful desires. It's not because I wouldn't have you. I wanted it." And beloved, I know for some of you, you look at relationships and say, "Oh, I want that but they won't have it." The only point we're making here: Christ knew that feeling. Christ knew that desire. Christ knew that lack of fulfillment in a human sense when he stiff-armed away and people stiff-arm you away and say, "Leave me alone! I'll have nothing to do with your Christ." You say, "But I love you. But I care about you," you say as they have their backs walking away from you. Oh, beloved, what I want you to see is that Christ knows that rejection by personal experience and therefore he sympathizes with you when you endure a lesser experience of it for his sake. Of course he is sympathetic. Of course he cares. He knows what it's like and he understands that you're going through that for the sake of his name and all of a sudden, as we've said, it's as if the French doors of intimacy

have been pulled back, opened up, and Christ says, "Yeah, now you get it, don't you? Come in and rest with me for little while."

One last passage on this, Matthew 19:41. Out forever on the idea, on the suggestion that Christ is indifferent, that Christ is uncaring. In verse 41 when he approached Jerusalem, this is Luke 19:41, "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.'" What was the heart of Christ? Luke 19:41, what was the heart of Christ like in the midst of that rejection by his own people? He wept over it. He sobbed. His compassion was real. This was no false emotion. He knew that their own stubborn refusal was going to cost them their souls.

Beloved, if our Lord knew something about that, then what does that mean for us today? Today when people reject you, send you away, give you the employment pink slip, won't answer your calls, decline your desires to talk with them, say, "No. No. No. No. No. No." They say. When that happens and you're feeling the weight of, "But this is someone I love and care about and I can't do anything about it," today when people reject your love, reject your testimony, reject any relationship with you, let's make it all real simple here: when that happens, remember that your Savior sees and your Savior understands and your Savior's arms, as it were, are open wide and say, "Come and pour out your heart to me for I've been there. I know. I knew this was coming for you. I appointed it for you. Now draw more closely to me." Draw more closely to Christ. When the days are weary and the long nights are dreary, you can know, beloved, your Savior cares.

Look at Hebrews 4. As you're turning there, one of the things that this does is it also liberates you from those constant second guessings of things that you said or did in the past. "Maybe if I had done it a little differently. Maybe it's my fault." Well, maybe you've been a pain-in-the-neck and you've lost relationships over that. That's something different. But when it's for the sake of Christ, this liberates you from wondering, "Maybe I should have done something differently." Jesus said this is part of the warp and woof of discipleship. And when you're in the midst of that, beloved, when your family members won't return your calls, when they say the harsh and vindictive things that they know are going to wound you, come to Christ. Remember his sympathy.

Hebrews 4:14, the writer of Hebrews says, "we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." In that isolation that you feel, beloved, go to Christ with the confidence and promise of his word that he is receiving you with a sense of compassion, with mercy, with grace, with the intention to fully welcome you, bless you. As he said in Matthew 11, "Come to me all you who are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Let the occasion of the rejection be that which gives you and in which you find the certainty and the fulfillment of his promise to give rest to his people in their sufferings, particularly

when he says, "when people insult you and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Me." He knows. He cares. You can trust him.

Well, there is a final thing that we would say and we'll just say this by way of introduction and save the rest of it for next week: remember the purpose of your salvation. The purpose of your salvation. At this point, we would pivot into Matthew 5:13. I'm not going to discuss the verse really here today except to just make this known to you just to remind you sometimes there are perspectives that we need to understand, to have a defining perspective on the way that we think about our salvation and what it means to be a Christian in a lost and dying world. You need to know what the purpose of your salvation is, beloved. And I say this gently but I say it hopefully with clarity so that it can sink deep into your heart: Jesus Christ did not save you so that you would be popular with men. Christ did not save you so that unsaved men would adore you and welcome you and think that you're someone great. That wasn't the purpose. They rejected him, they reject us. You see, you have a greater purpose in the world than having your own ego stroked or finding your emotional satisfaction in human relationships. That's not the point of your salvation, beloved. The point of your salvation is something completely different, it is transcendent, it is far greater than that. It is not about you. It's not about you.

Verse 13 of Matthew 5, Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Salt and light here as we're going to see in the weeks to come, are metaphors. They are word pictures to give you a sense of the purpose of your salvation and why it is that you exist as a Christian in this world. It is not for your sake. It is not so that you can maximize everything that this world has to offer, not to maximize the applause of men because you know from sad personal experience a lot of times the men don't applaud for you. Your purpose is something different. As we're going to see, your purpose is to be as salt to the world. Salt used is that which prevented decay in meat and helped it not to rot. Christ uses you, uses your godly life in order to help retard the spiritual decay of the world. Collectively, that's the impact that the church has. Individually in your sphere of relationships, that's the impact you have. You act as a restraining influence against sin. That is different from having people like you. You say, "Ah, okay, so it's not about being liked after all. I have a different purpose therefore I can shape my affections and desires according to the real purpose rather than what I thought I wanted." Remember the purpose of your salvation when rejection comes. Light speaks of truth and understanding, of manifesting in a positive way the truth of the Gospel, the truth of God's word, the supremacy of Christ, and you shine light in that sense.

You see, beloved, the purpose of your salvation and these human relationships with which we have framed our time here together this morning, the purpose of the relationships is not primarily for your benefit. It's not primarily that people would love you even. You have a spiritual purpose. Having been purchased by the Commander-in-Chief, purchased by his blood, says, "You will be a citizen in my kingdom in this foreign hostile territory." And as you live out and as you pursue the character of the Beatitudes,

here's what's going to happen. Here's the purpose. You'll have a restraining influence on sin and you will testify to the truth of the Gospel. And as people accept or reject us along the way, that is subsidiary, it is secondary, it is incidental to the greater purpose for which Christ saved you. Remember the purpose of your salvation.

So what we've described here is that which comforts your heart. The reality of salvation, its future reward, the sympathy of Christ, the purpose of your salvation, all of that informs the way that you respond to that rejection. All of it gives you comfort. All of it gives you confidence. All of it gives you motivation to transcend it. And as you think through those things, beloved, then you start to realize, "I've been saved for something different. I've been saved for a kingdom that is not of this world and I'm glad to belong to Christ. And whatever price I pay for belonging to him, I gladly pay."

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Lord, comfort your people, encourage them, help them, deepen their comprehension of your vast love for their souls. And help us, Lord, so that indeed we might know and we might sing that the things of this world for us truly have grown strangely dim in the light of your glory and your grace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

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