

In the Shadow of the Cross - Bearing His Reproach

by J. Glyn Owen

In this sermon, J. Glyn Owen emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Christ and the inevitability of suffering for His sake in a world that often rejects Him.

Duration: 1:01:52

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 6:33, John 15:18, John 16:1-4

Topics: "Reproach"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of knowing Jesus and the Father in order to bring about change in the world. He emphasizes that this knowledge comes at a cost, as there will be suffering and death involved. The preacher draws a parallel to the story of the Spaniards conquering South America, where they had to choose between wealth and danger or poverty and safety. Jesus warns his followers that they will face hatred and persecution from the world, but assures them that he was hated before them. The sermon concludes with the idea that when God calls someone to serve him, they must fully commit their lives to it, even if they are tempted to go back to their previous ways.

Transcript

Shall we turn together to the passage that Mr. Lowe has just read for us in John chapter 15 beginning with verse 18. You remember that we are continuing our main theme, expanding John chapters 13 over 17 under the title, In the Shadow of the Cross. All these words were actually uttered and the prayer of John 17 was prayed by our Lord within a stone's throw of the cross of Calvary.

It is necessary for us to remember that all these events in these chapters took place within 24 hours of his being crucified on the cross. Now, Mr. MacLeod last Lord's Day evening introduced us to John 15, dealing with a passage that is perhaps the more familiar aspect of this chapter, the more familiar section verses 1 to 15 concerning the vine and the branches. Now, let's see the setting clearly as we come to the passage before us tonight.

Jesus, under the shadow of the cross, is reminding his disciples that they are in a deep life union with himself. It may have sounded strange to some ears because he was going to die, but you see he was so sure of his resurrection, so absolutely certain of the issue, that he would rise from the dead and that he would ascend to the Father and that he would send forth the other paraclete and that he would thereby

become the author of eternal life to all who would receive it by his grace. And so he tells them, now look, he says, I want you to get this absolutely clear.

I, he says, am the true vine, not a sham, not a dilapidating, crumbling, ashen vine that is dead. I'm the true vine. There is life in me, undying life, everlasting life, and you, he says, you are the branches.

You who believe in me have believed into me. If we could read the New Testament in the language in which it was written, we would be more familiar than we are with that preposition. The New Testament does not simply believe, does not simply write about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, but it often speaks about believing into him.

We don't have the equivalent in English, but it's a matter of so believing into the Lord Jesus Christ that we become one with him, bound to him. We are joined to him like the branches of the vine. We become one with him like the bride and the husband, as we were thinking of this morning.

Now he has given them that picture and he has told them, in fact, that the one thing they need to bear fruit is to make sure that they abide in the vine and draw therefore their sustenance, not from outside of the vine, but from within the vine. What he's saying, in other words, is this. Everything that you can possibly need is in me.

I'm the vine, the life you may need, the energy, the whatever. Everything that you can conceivably need in order to bring forth fruit is in me. Now our Lord comes to the most challenging part.

He begins to tell the disciples the world in which they are to bear fruit for him and out of fellowship with him. And you can see, you can see the real, dare I say it, the real psychology of our Lord here, as well as his understanding of human nature. But it's always true of him.

You find it everywhere in the Gospels. I have no time to illustrate. You find it everywhere in the Gospels.

Before our Lord Jesus points us to the cross bearing and the trials and the difficulties and perplexities that may await us as his followers, he invariably points us to the resources. Now that's what he's been doing here. He has got this right into their minds, as it were.

I'm the true vine. You're the branches. Abide in me.

Don't go running away from me. Don't try to run away. Don't try to get away, but remain in intimate relationship with me.

And then as you abide in me, my life in you will result in fruit bearing. Now we come to, first of all, the sphere in which that fruit bearing is to take place. You have that from verse 18 in chapter 15 right through to verse 25.

The sphere in which the believer is to bear fruit is here designated as the world. Now that doesn't simply refer to the cosmos, the world as such, but it refers to the world as a moral climate. That is, the world as society organized without positive reference to God.

The world as a community of men and women living according to their own tenets and their own standards. Living without any vital reference to God or the acceptance of him and his rule over them. You, he says, are to bear forth fruit as branches of the vine right there in the midst of the world.

We gather from this statement something that is true of every Christian man and woman. We live in two worlds at one and the same time. If you're a Christian, then first of all, you are a man or a woman in Christ.

You're in Christ. This is a favorite Pauline word, and it's a very important one. You may be a young Christian.

Have you ever seen yourself as a man or a woman in Christ? That's your sphere. You live in Christ. That's why you're saved.

You're enveloped in Christ like a letter in an envelope. You're a man, you're a woman in Christ. His righteousness covers you.

His blood besprinkles you. You're in Christ, and you have life in him. But you're also in the world.

But as sure as you're in Christ, you're no longer of the world, but you're still in it. You're born of the spirit if you're in Christ. You're no longer of the world in the sense that you were born in the world and lived according to its tenets.

But as a man or a woman in Christ, you're still in the world. And the whole thrust of this passage is this, you who are in the vine have a ministry to perform in this present and evil world. Now I want you to notice how our Lord begins.

He starts off with a gentle caution here. This has come home to me very forcibly during the week. He starts off with verse 18.

He says, he hasn't told them very much about it yet, you see. He's just breaking the news gradually, gently. If the world hates you.

Now that's a hypothetical if. But you read on and you will see there's no doubt at all about the world hating them. He knows that and he's going to tell them much more about it.

But you see, our Lord measured his words to the needs of his people. This is very, very precious. He didn't just break the truth in a way that would do justice to the truth, but injustice to the hearers.

They were lacerated. They were afraid. They were frightened.

They were buffeted. He had told them that he was leaving and there was this other parablete coming to take his place. They just couldn't make much sense of this.

How could he be at one time absent from them and present with them? It just didn't make sense. They'd never experienced anything like this before. And they were perplexed and bewildered.

He, the one that they've touched and handled and lived with, he's leaving them. So you see, he's not just going to say to them, fellows, you're in for a very bad time. A whole world's going to come right on top of you and you're going to be killed outright.

He doesn't come to it like that, but gently, gently, or he'll tell them that they will be cast out of the synagogues. He's tell them that people who will murder them will think that they're doing God's service in the first few verses of chapter 16, which is the end of this passage, really. He'll tell them that quite bluntly in a moment.

But you see, he introduces the theme as one who cares for people. I wish I had grace like that. I wish I had understanding like that.

Don't you? Gently, our Lord introduces this theme to his disciples. But now let's look at it. What does he say? First of all, Jesus assures his followers that if the world hates them, and this is the way he introduces it, if the world hates them, hates you, now he says, remember this, it hated me before it hated you.

Evidently, he wants to give them a little bit of comfort before they come to appreciate the pain and the challenge that is involved. If the world hates you, he says, remember this, it's hated me long before it hated you. So he says, in other words, you are going to bear my reproach.

If they're going to hate you for my sake, if they're going to hate you as branches of the vine, if they're going to hate you because you are in life union with me, not because of some idiosyncrasy in yourselves. You know, we can bring a lot of hatred upon ourselves for no reason at all, other than that we are odd and difficult. And we've got some jagged edges that need to be dealt with and we can call, we can bring the whole house on top of ourselves.

Well, now Jesus is not thinking of that. He's thinking of them going out as branches of the vine as men and women in Christ and being faithful to him. Now he says, if the world hates you in that context, remember this, the world also hated me long before it hated you.

And the implication is this, you see, if they're going to suffer, well, they're going to suffer because of their loyalty to him. And so before he comes to expose the kind of danger in which they're going to find themselves in, he kind of assures them the suffering that is coming, the pain that is coming, it's coming to you because of your relationship with me, because of your fellowship with me, because you are as the branch in the vine. You're part of me.

You know, it's very difficult for us in our flabby, comfortable Western world to take in the fact that some kind of suffering is inevitable to the faithful followers of our Lord. I say faithful followers. That suffering may be mental, spiritual, social, physical, but as sure as we are faithful to our Lord, we shall suffer.

The nature of the Christian and the nature of the unbelieving world are so diametrically different. They are as darkness and light, black and white, Satan and God. They are so utterly antithetical and opposite.

You who are children of the light cannot be involved with the children of darkness without suffering. I find that very difficult to take in, to come to terms with. You see, as I was meditating upon this theme this week, I could say that I would hear the voice of the Lord coming out from this passage saying to me, your ability to live at peace with a fallen Christ rejecting world doesn't mean that you're clever, and it doesn't mean that you're godly.

Do you know what it means? You're not faithful. See, you and I tend to think that because we can get away, we can go through a week without any wounds, without any warts, without any marks, without anybody quarreling with us, without anybody trying to check us up, without somebody slapping us in the face metaphorically or physically, we say we're getting along very well. Shall I tell you, we are not.

If we were faithful to our Lord, we'd have an occasional slap, and we'd have many a jerk, and we'd be glad to see the front door of our apartment in the evening to get along, to be with the Lord. Don't think that you're clever because you avoid the pains and the anguish and the sorrows and the sufferings of witnessing. It's because we are cowards, and it's because we are immature, it's because we are carnal,

that we have no wounds.

And I speak to myself, my dear people, before I speak to you. Now, having thus gently introduced it, you see how the Lord covers it there. We talk about coating the pill, don't we, and putting a little bit of sugar on it.

Well, he's certainly putting sugar on that. But behind it all, you can see it there, and it's going to come out. He's going to make it very explicit in a moment.

Jesus then enlarges the explanation already implicit in his fast and gentle introduction of the theme. Now, he says, here it is, if you belonged to the world, well, it would love you as its own. It's always true.

If you belong to the world, the world would love you as its own. But, he says, because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, that is why the world hates you. The world hates you because I have called you.

I have chosen you. I've called you out of the world. I've called you to be myself.

I've called you to be a branch, to change the metaphor, to go back to the beginning of the chapter. I've called you to be a branch of the true vine. You're in me.

You're in life union with me. Because of that, the world hates you. The moment the world recognizes the distinction that God has made a difference, to quote the King James Version of the verse in Exodus 11, referring to the children of Israel, that you may know, says Moses to the Egyptians, that the Lord doth put a difference between his people and those who are not his.

The moment the world sees that, that God has called us and made us his own, that very moment the world becomes resentful and bitter and angered. There is nothing like the doctrine of election to show up the heart of the world. You say anything to the man of the world, which causes him to recognize that you're saying that God in mercy has come to you and called you and made you his own and left him where he is.

You'll know what his heart is made of. But now our Lord moves on. A more open warning of future hostility.

What Jesus stated hypothetically in verse 18, if the world hates you, he now proceeds to state far more categorically. Oh yes, they will unquestionably be persecuted. There is no if about it, but now he says, remember, remember the words I spoke to you.

No servant is greater than his master. Jesus followers had witnessed the enmity of the world to their master in many, many circumstances. I really would have liked to know how they took this in, what they thought, what they imagined when they heard Jesus say this.

Remember the words I spoke to you. He'd already said this. You see before the servant is not greater than his Lord or his master.

No servant is greater than his master. What is he saying? What he's saying is this. I've suffered at the hands of the world and I'm the master by your own confession.

I'm the son of God. I'm God incarnate. I'm the Lord.

This is our morning's theme. And they recognize that they confessed in that. Who are thou? Who do men say that I am? Who did Peter say? Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.

And they believe that. Well, now he says, all right, I've suffered at the hand of the Lord and I am Christ, the son of the living God. Now I'm the master.

He says, remember the words that I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his Lord. So if you really mean what you say about me, you shouldn't itch to avoid things that I have accepted.

My friends, what are we expecting from a fallen world? I find this is psychologically one of the most important questions to ask myself and to ask anybody who is finding trouble with in this materialistic age and is getting so involved with things and possessions that they're forgetting or tending to forget the most important things of all. What do we expect? What are your expectations? Now, what Jesus is saying here is this. When you are in mystical union, in life union with him, in saving union with him, you and I have no right to expect anything better than he experienced.

Now that's hard. If he was crucified, if he was persecuted, if he suffered at the hands of the world, then on the basis of what reasoning can his servant expect better. But you see, we have expectations that have no basis in scripture at all.

And sometimes our evangelism, sometimes our preaching makes people expect things like this. Come to Jesus and all will be rosy. Come to Jesus and you'll get rich.

I've put on my radio going home from here late at night, and I've heard some people preaching on the radio and it's virtually saying this. If you want to get rich, send me a \$10 bill and I'll bless it. And you can have all you want and wherever you want it.

You know, it's a lie of the devil. It's satanic. But you know, there are many people who believe this.

Jesus said, remember the words that I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his master and therefore has no right to expect anything better than his master. Certainly.

Oh yes, they saw their master suffered. I have no time to go into this though. I think it would be very helpful if you could do it on your own.

See what they saw from the beginning of his ministry to the end of his ministry. I suggest to you that you take a good look. For example, at that first time that Jesus went back during the era of his public ministry, went back to his home city, hometown, home village, Nazareth.

And he went to the synagogue and he took the scroll and he began to read from Isaiah chapter 60, 61. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor. Do you remember that passage? And then when he had come to the end, he unrolled, he rolled back the scroll and he handed it back to the administrator.

And he said, men and brethren, he says this day you have seen this scripture fulfilled in your very midst. Now they didn't know what to say. They were absolutely stunned, perplexed.

Some said we never heard words like this before. Then instinctively some other people replied, is this Joseph's son? We've got his brothers and his sisters around. How do you explain this? The fact is, you see, they just wouldn't believe that he was the Messiah, the anointed one with the spirit of the Lord upon

him.

And they just wouldn't believe. And Jesus goes on and he explains to them why they wouldn't believe. You see it there in John four, you'll find it all there.

And then we read this. All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, they drove him out of the town and they took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him down over the cliff.

But he walked right through the crowd and he went on his way. Something of the miraculous comes in there. I don't know how to explain it other than in terms of the miraculous.

Our Lord Jesus kind of did something and he walked right through them and went away and somehow or other they were not able to put hands on him because his hour had not yet come. You find that you find that especially towards the end of his life again, particularly after the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We find that the, the, the, the, the leaders of the, the Pharisees, they were so envenomed by that supreme miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

They decided we must put this man to death. They use words like this. They said the whole world has gone after him.

And if we don't do something very quickly, we're going to lose out. I don't know. I don't understand their logic because they said we're going to lose out.

And then the Romans will come and take away the kingdom and we'll lose everything. Well, I don't know why the Romans should come in, but at any rate, that's what they said. And so they hatched a plot to get rid of him.

If you want me to read it, the chief priests and the Pharisees gave orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him. John 11, 53 to 57. These are about illustrations, but you see what he's saying is this, they persecuted me.

You've got no right to expect anything better. You're the servants. I'm the master.

But the other side of that coin, however, is comforting. Jesus adds, oh, how he balances out his truths, the challenging and the comforting. They come in due course.

You go on, you read on with the Lord Jesus. He's never on one side to the exclusion of the other. There is such a perfect equipoise in his doctrinal expositions.

If they obeyed my teaching, he says they will obey yours or you will have to suffer the kind of pain that I suffered. Maybe more. You're the servants, but he says, nevermind.

There's another side to the story, too. If they believe me, they believe you. Now, I don't know whether he meant to say if they have believed me, then they will receive you.

Or does he mean as sure as they would believe in me if I were to go there personally? So, too, would they, will they believe in you as my representatives? I'm not sure. And the reason for the world's hatred of Jesus and his true disciples is not to be traced to the master himself, nor to the servants. Jesus explains that in verses 21 to 23, they will treat you this way, he says, for they do not know the one who sent me.

The world has rejected the testimony of the Savior's words as well as of his works to this point in time. And all without reason, he goes on to say that they hated me without a cause, he says at the end of that passage. And they will fulfill the scripture which says that they hated me without a cause.

Their determined rejection of Christ and his total ministry was as irrational as it was fatal. A holy irrationality had got hold of them. But it was all because of this.

They didn't know the Father. Or why didn't they know the Father? For this reason. Light had come into the world, but they preferred darkness to light.

There before them was the very incarnate Lord, come to tell them everything they needed to know in order to know the Father. There was the very one person ever to have walked on this terrestrial ball, who knew God in all his glory and grandeur and grace, and he'd come to reveal the Father, and he was there. But you see, they didn't want to know.

They wanted to keep the image of the God they had, with little bits of truth and little bits of lies in it. A mixture of truth and error. And they didn't want to give up the error, and so they loved the kind of life they lived and the kind of things they themselves believed, and they didn't want to give up anything.

Now that hostile world is the place where the disciples are to bear fruit. You got it? The branches of the vine are to bear fruit, 60-fold, 90-fold, 100-fold, or whatever. They are to bear fruit where? In that hostile world.

Christians were never made to be hothouse plants. Christians were made to live in life union with Jesus Christ and to be pruned as life goes on, and yet despite the pruning and despite the atmosphere of hatred and antagonism, in the midst of it all to bear fruit because they are in life union with one who is strong and whose life is eternal and whose grace is sufficient. Be it noted, therefore, and this is perhaps one of the main lessons from this section, God has not intended that we men and women in Christ should withdraw into isolation from the world, nor that we should engage in defensive measures in order to avoid the world's hatred, much less are we to be involved in retaliation for the world's unjust hostility.

We're not a fight back. As branches of the true vine, we are to abide in fellowship with our Lord and bear fruit in the very sphere where we are hurt and perhaps killed. The second main thing here is the service by means of which the branches of the true vine are to bear fruit in that kind of world.

Now, the setting for the Christian service is now amplified. Look at verse 26. When the counselor comes, or the comforter, whichever word you prefer, the paraclete, when the counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the spirit of truth, who goes out from the father, he will testify about me.

You also must testify. Now we're adding something new into the situation. We're talking about the service by means of which the branches of the true vine are to bear fruit in this evil, fallen, hostile world.

And we're looking first of all at the setting. Now, so far we have stressed the hostility of the world, but at the same time we have stressed the fact that every Christian servant, every Christian man or woman is in life union with Jesus Christ. Now we have something new, and the order is important.

Before Jesus specified the peculiar nature of the apostolic service to bear witness, he says to them that he wants them to be very much aware of something that is to precede their own witness. When he, when the counselor comes, or the comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the spirit of truth, who

goes out from the father, he will testify about me, and then you will testify. The order is exceedingly important.

They are in the world, but they're not alone. They're like branches in the vine. They're in touch with their living Lord.

More than that, the paraclete is with them and in them, or is coming. At that point, he had not yet come. At Pentecost, he came.

Now, notice the setting will be one which Jesus himself says he is preparing. It's almost impossible for us to take this in. John is so rich, and he's got so many thoughts converging here at one and the same time.

You'll be in a hostile world, but I don't want you to think, says Jesus in effect, I don't want you to think that in that hostile world, I've got no control. I have control. I'm going to send into that hostile world the very one who can capacitate you to bear fruit there, the paraclete.

And I'm going to send him forth, and you can bank on it. He will be there by the time you have your marching orders. He'll be there.

He'll be in the hostile world itself. He'll be there. Can you see what he's saying? The world into which they go will be hostile, but there is another factor which is equally and even more relevant to their mission.

It's the fact that there is provision made to be loyal to our Lord and fruitful in his name, even in the hostile world. Now, we live this side of the historical fulfillment of that promise at Pentecost, and the blessed Holy Spirit did come down, and he abides with his people still. And we need to see the principle here as it applied not only for the first disciples, but for ourselves.

When you and I are sent out into the world and told by our Lord that it's going to be a hostile world until it is converted, until it is changed by himself, we need to remember that into whatever hostility we go, Jesus Christ has sent forth the paraclete to be with his people. Every branch in the vine, every man in Christ is a man or a woman that can count on the presence of the Holy Ghost. I don't know how to get this across.

My friends, can I put it to you like this? Where are you going tomorrow morning? Some of you are going to school, some of you are going to an office, some of you are going here, some of you are going there. And perhaps you're experiencing hostility there. And if you're going to be really loyal to your Lord, it'll come.

Sometimes in a very subtle way, but you'll feel opposition and you'll sense it. Listen, my friend. Jesus has had a hand in organizing that scene and that setting too.

And he tells you tonight on this Sunday night, before you go back, I have sent, I've made arrangements to send the paraclete there. And you can depend upon his presence when it's time for you to go out into the world. In my name, he'll be there.

He'll be a part of the situation. That's what it means to live Christianly. It is to move into the most impossible situation, seeing the fury of men, but recognizing that though I can't see him, the blessed Holy Ghost is there.

For heaven sent, paraclete is available and I can draw upon resources, not my own and trust him. In all probability, we are to think particularly of the Spirit's ministry of testifying to the Lord Jesus, as he says in verse 26, he will testify of me. We are to think of it in this way.

And we go out into a hostile world. The world tends to make us timid. Maybe we feel a little bit ashamed of our Lord for some reason or other, and certainly timid and cold.

But you see one thing that the Holy Spirit does, one thing that the paraclete does is he comes from the father and he is the spirit of truth. He will testify to the Lord Jesus Christ where, first of all, in the hearts of the believer. Now you see, this is why believers can't really keep silent if they are in real fellowship with God.

Because the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil tries to make me forget about him, or the devil cows me down and makes me afraid. Aha! But who is greater, the blessed paraclete in my heart or Satan without? He will testify of me.

He comes from the father and the father has testified of me. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. The spirit comes from the father and the spirit is the spirit of truth.

And the spirit will remind the believer about Jesus, about his grace, about his glory, about his authority, about his lordship. And as the spirit reminds the believer and testifies to Christ's faithfulness, so the believer will feel, I've got to speak. Have you ever felt that? Do you remember Peter? Oh, bless him.

This is a wonderful theme, isn't it? Hallelujah. Do you remember Peter after Pentecost? Oh, they've been had up and they've been challenged because they spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus. And in Acts 4.20, Peter says this.

Let me just cull this sentence. He says, we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard. Peter, how come? In Jerusalem, this is the place where they crucified your Lord and they're all seething at you.

They're foaming at the mouth. They're angry. You are the disciples of the crucified.

How comes it? Well, you see, it's the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do? It testifies to the Lord Jesus, his deserts, his glory, his victory, his compassion, his grace, his will for other people who are unsaved. And as the Holy Spirit witnesses within the hearts of the redeemed to the truth about Jesus, men feel I've got to speak.

I can't withhold. Neither is Peter an exception. Paul said it's exactly the same thing in different words.

Woe is unto me, says Paul in writing to the Corinthians, if I preach not the gospel. You ever know anything about that? If the Holy Spirit is not utterly grieved in your heart and mind, my friends, there will be time when you know what it is to be made. As if you're about to burst whilst you try to keep silence and come to terms with the world.

You remember how the poor prophet Jeremiah said he says, I feel a fire in my bones, he says, and I can't keep quiet. That's the point. Paul says, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

When I preach the gospel, I can't boast, he says, but I'm compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. Now I want to strike a note here.

I'm sorry I'm going off at a tangent, but I want to strike a note here. I believe that God calls every Christian man and woman to do something and gives us gifts to do something for him. But there is a difference between the calling that Paul is speaking of here.

It's the calling to preach the gospel. Whether we like it or not, the calling of a baker to be a baker or a banker to be a banker is not the same thing in the New Testament as the calling of an apostle to preach. Now we've tried to steamroller these things and to make them all the same.

They're not. When God calls a man out of his avocation and tells him, look, I want you to put the whole of your life into this business. I want you to invest not only a couple of hours a week, but the whole of your life, your body, your soul, your everything.

That is a call, which is the kind of thing Paul has here. And he says, woe is me if I don't do it. I've got to do it.

It was the same with Peter. He tried to go back to his boats many times, but he couldn't. You count the number of times some of these apostles tried to go back home, but they couldn't do it.

They were called, you see, and they couldn't get involved with their fishing and do their little bit for the Lord. Some are called to pack up everything. And I think that we, especially here in North America, if you forgive me, especially here in North America, in America and here in Canada, especially in trying to say that every believer has a gift and every believer is called to be involved in something in the Lord's work.

We are in terrible danger of forgetting the primacy of the preaching ministry. And in the new Testament, it is by the foolishness of preaching that God saves them that believe. So it is in the new Testament.

So it is in the course of church history. Now, preaching is at a discount today, but this is the new Testament. And I think we've got to get out of it.

We are allowing rather superficial teachers of the Bible to gloss over things that should not be glossed over. Right at the heart, right at the spearhead of the advance of the church is this mighty proclamation of men whom God has called to preach. And he's put the seal of the spirit upon them.

Now, Paul experienced it, Peter experienced it, but in some measure, every Christian will know the ministry of the spirit telling him, you must, you ought, Jesus deserves it. He testifies to Jesus. The setting amplified the service of the Lord's followers in that double setting is this then you also must testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

Now I can't dwell at any length on this tonight, but here comes the matter of witness bearing. Again, there are, there is something here to distinguish that we do not always distinguish. And we need to, the witness of the apostles was one thing.

Our witnessing is quite a different thing from the witnessing of the apostles. And I hope we understand that you see, Jesus goes on to say, and you too shall bear witness. Why? Because you've been with me from the beginning.

Now our Christian faith is based upon what Christ did, what Christ said, what Christ accomplished, but don't put period there. How do we know what Christ said, what Christ did, what Christ accomplished by the witness of those who saw him and who heard him and who touched him and who handled him witnesses. Now I didn't witness the resurrection, neither did you.

I didn't see the empty tomb, neither did you. I didn't touch the incarnate Lord, neither did you. I didn't hear him when he was here physically, neither did you nor anybody else, only these.

And Jesus's message is first of all, to them, not exclusively, but first of all, to them, he says, the Holy Spirit will bear witness to me. Then he says, you must bear witness. The Holy Spirit is not going to do what you can do.

Neither can you do what the Holy Spirit is going to do, but in the context of the Holy Spirit's bearing witness to the truth, you then must bear witness in the power of the Spirit and as branches in the vine. Oh, you can see this. It thrills my soul.

Here are the disciples going out as a band of nobodies to face the world. How are they going out as branches of the vine, as men who trust in the presence of the paraclete, as men who owe their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. And they speak as witnesses.

Again, if I may quote from Acts chapter five, Peter says this, when they've been in trouble again, you remember and been in prison, he comes out and he says, we are witnesses of these things. And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. We are witnesses of the spirit is a witness.

Now that's enough. He says, we've seen these things happen. We saw Jesus alive from the dead.

He told us he was going to be with the father. The spirit came. The promise was fulfilled.

We've, we've, we've experienced these things and we've seen certain other things and we've heard certain things and the things which we have seen and heard and experienced, we have witnesses to. But now having said that, this especially relates to the, to the disciples who had been with him from the beginning and were able to witness to every aspect of his ministry. It applies nevertheless, in principle to all of us.

You see, if you are abiding in the vine, you ought to have a lot more to say about the vine. If you're living in Christ, you should have something to say about him. And if the Holy Spirit, the spirit of truth is in you, and he's come to testify not to about you, but about the Lord Jesus Christ, because of your abiding in Christ who is the vine.

And because the spirit abides in you and he's the spirit of truth. And he says, he's come to witness to the Lord Jesus Christ because of the combined reasons you and I should be full of Christ. And you see the remarkable thing is that you and I can be so quiet about Christ.

We can talk about everything, but not about him. Whereas in principle, you too must witness. You too must witness.

Are you in the vine? Has he called you out of darkness into light? Has he called you to be with himself as he incorporated you into life union with him? Have you been born anew? Have you the spirit? Have you the paraclete? But then you've got something to say. Don't go beyond what you know, but you've got something to say. Whereas once I was blind, I can now see.

Whereas once I was dead, I'm now alive. Whereas once I didn't know God, I'm beginning to know him in Jesus Christ. Say what you know.

That brings me and I conclude with this, just a reference to it. Having said all that, and you see the way the Lord has come to it. He now comes to the sequel to the Christians witnessing to Christ in the hostile world.

The first four verses of John 16. The reason for warning them of suffering ahead is now made very, very clear. All this I have told you, he says, so that you will not.

The NIV says, go astray. The word is the word verb from the noun scandal on that you shouldn't trip up. You shouldn't become ensnared.

If persecution took these disciples by surprise, they might very well, but unnecessarily conclude that they themselves have blundered or that are there Lord had let them down. Jesus would prevent such disappointment from happening by telling them what to expect and telling them quite clearly. I have told you this.

He says, so that when the time comes, you will remember that I warned you. Verse four. I did not tell you this at the first, because I myself was with you.

But now that he is receding, that is the implication that physically he is departing from the, he wants them to be quite clear as to what to expect. He would have them remember that he had not led them astray with false promises of a rosy pathway to glory. He had clearly foretold the need to bear the cross.

And then alongside the reason for warning them of suffering ahead, we see his realism and now telling them quite clearly what to expect. Look at verse two. And this was a prophecy that was literally fulfilled.

They will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, a time will be coming when anyone who kills you murders, you will think he is offering a service to God. Notice the two things there.

Jesus now refers to the most extreme spiritual price that any Jew could ever be asked to pay and the extreme agony of suffering to the point of death, spiritual and material anguish. No Jew could be, could be made to suffer more. If he was a good Jew, then the suffering, the spiritual anguish of being separated from the synagogue, the only means of grace, the place where the scriptures were read and where prayers were offered and where God had promised to meet with his people.

There was no other. You may speak about the temple, but the temple was not that the heart of of of Jewish life. It was the synagogue that was the heart of of every Jewish family.

That's where they worshiped. They went to the to the temple for sacrifices and for the the synagogue. That was the main spring of the spiritual life.

If there was spiritual life now to be severed from the synagogue meant also, of course, by implication severed from the temple. So for a Jew to be excommunicated from the synagogue, it was, it was really the last straw. If he was a good Jew, Jesus says, this is what will happen to you.

But not only that, there will come a day when those who will murder you, who will kill you will actually believe that they're doing God a favor. This is Christian service. I'm sorry.

This is godly service to slay the Christians. And Saul of Tarsus was not the only one who believed that. But when you move into the era of, of, of the persecution of Rome, the Roman persecution of the Christian church, as well as here in the Jewish context, people believe that they were doing God honor in getting rid of the Christians or doing the God's honor as in the case of Rome.

Why should the world be so cruel? Well, Jesus ends on this note again, as far as this passage tonight is concerned, and he comes back, you notice he's repeated it. There are certain things that Jesus repeats

over and over again. They will do such things because they have not known the father or me.

What he's saying is this, the only thing that can change the world and change your lot in the world is this. When people come to know me and to know the father, to know the father through me, but in order to bring men to the knowledge of the father through me, it's going to cost somebody's life and somebody's comfort. There's got to be suffering and there will have to be death.

Have you ever read the story of the Spaniards conquering parts of South America? If you have, you may well remember this epic story of Pizarro presented presenting his men with a choice. He said that they might have the wealth of Peru with its dangers or the comparative poverty of Panama with its safety. You remember this epic story and Pizarro drew a line in the sand under his feet with a sword and he said, comrades, on that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, storm, desertion, and death.

On this side is ease. On that side lies Peru with its riches. Here lies Panama with its poverty.

Choose. Each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, he says, I go to the south.

There was a deathly silence and a hesitation. And then an old pilot, it is said, and 12 soldiers together crossed the line on the sand and stood by the side of Pizarro. They were the people.

They were the people who discovered and conquered Peru. What Jesus offered his first disciples. He still offers us today.

It is the privilege as branches of the true vine to bear fruit for him, not separated from him, but in fellowship with him to bear fruit for him in a hostile world. In order to launch forth and continue our task, it is necessary that we come to terms with the fact that suffering and maybe death is involved in the process of obedience. And when once we've come to terms with that, nothing will silence us anymore.

Remember Solzhenitsyn, Alexander Solzhenitsyn made that very clear. How in the concentration camps where he had been, he discovered that the men or the women who had come to terms with death and suffering, then those in charge of concentration camps have nothing to frighten them with. You could do nothing with a man who's come to terms with death.

I was willing to die and willing to suffer brothers and sisters in Christ. I have a feeling that you and I are standing somewhere on a crossroads in history. We may not be aware of what's happening, but something is happening.

And the Christian church requires tonight, men and women who are prepared to come to terms with suffering and death for Jesus' sake. Having so come to terms with suffering and death in the will of God, then we shall be free to speak of him as circumstances require. Let us pray.

Oh God, our Father, we come again into your presence with humble, grateful thanks and adoration that it has been given to us to know such truths about our Lord's closing hours in this world. We thank you for the wealth he communicated to his disciples just at that last hour, on that very night before he was going to die, on the way to Gethsemane. How he was able to concentrate on these things and think of them rather than on himself and be so considerate in the way he expounded his truth and yet expounded all that he had to say in due course and presented the truth with such balance and poise that it did not frighten them, but there was comfort as well as challenge.

Oh Lord God, our Father, we thank you for our Savior as prophet, priest and king. And we ask that you will enable us like these disciples of old to come to terms with the demands of real discipleship. Forgive us our complacency, our carelessness, our sheer empty profession so often.

Please God, make us real for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26595.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/in-the-shadow-of-the-cross-bearing-his-reproach/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net