

# The Offense of the Cross

by Neil Rhodes

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*The sermon explores the profound significance and offense of the cross in the Christian faith, emphasizing its power for salvation and reconciliation with God.*

**Duration:** 47:00

**Scripture:** Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:35-36, Matthew 27:38-42, Matthew 27:46, Matthew 27:50

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Salvation Power"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the controversy surrounding a movie about Jesus and the power of the cross. They emphasize that while the movie may be seen as foolishness to some, it is the power of God to those who believe. The speaker then delves into the events of Jesus' crucifixion, highlighting the tearing of the temple veil as a symbol of God's triumph over the devil's attempts to separate humanity from Him. They also mention the conversation between Jesus and the two thieves, illustrating the choice between accepting or rejecting Christ that individuals will always face.

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## Transcript

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You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. Turn with me tonight to Matthew chapter 27.

I'm going to speak to you tonight on the offense of the cross. Matthew chapter 27. We'll read half of it and then we're going to go to the word and preach a little bit and then we're going to come back to the second half as we conclude tonight.

Father, I thank you that you are present with us. Your presence has been felt all this evening. God, thank you that we serve a living God and an enemy that has been totally defeated.

Now tonight, Lord Jesus, I pray that your word will become alive and real in our hearts. God, make it a living word to us, I pray. That every person in the house that hears this word today will go home with a victory song in their heart, Lord Jesus.

It doesn't matter how tough the day has been or how great the attack, but God, there's a song of victory in our hearts because of what you've accomplished on the cross. Now, Lord, I ask that you hide me behind that same cross in Jesus' name. Amen.

Matthew chapter 27. Let's just begin reading from verse 35, and you're going to keep your finger in Matthew 27 the whole time, and I'll read other scriptures to you, but this is where we will meditate. Matthew chapter 27, verse 35, And they crucified him and parted his garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.

They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there, and set up over his head this accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Then there were two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand and another on the left.

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him with the scribes and the elders said, He saved others, himself he cannot save.

If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him. For he said, I am the Son of God.

The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth. So here we have the description of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I've titled this message, The Offense of the Cross.

And it actually came about this last week. In fact, yesterday, last night, my wife and I went to NYU, the medical center to share with the students. Many of the students in the medical team there had invited people to come and go, with them to go and watch the movie, The Passion.

And so one of their requests was from watching this movie, was they asked if they could have a pastor come and speak to them, and just to give them the Christian perspective. They had questions about the movie, there were things that were related in this particular movie, and they wanted to ask a pastor what some of the things meant, and there were things that they were confused on, and they wanted to ask questions. So I agreed to that.

I said, okay, my wife and I will come down and we'll sit down. They had this meal, and my wife and I sat there, and they bombarded us with questions. They gave us a whole list of questions.

We read through them, and we began to answer them, and then they began to just engage us in one question or another on the crucifixion of Christ. It was an awesome time. I loved every minute of it, just because we came to the conclusion that when I got to the end of this, I came to the conclusion, it didn't matter what you thought about the movie one way or another, the conclusion is this, Jesus Christ is preached.

And there were unsaved kids there as well. They went to the movie and were stunned by it, but they wanted to know. But the whole conclusion at the end of the meeting, we brought it all down.

We spoke about the covenant of Christ. We spoke about His redemptive work. It was a glorious opportunity to bring to them the knowledge and the presentation of Jesus.

I just said, God, give me this opportunity. I love these occasions when we can just sit down and take something like this and bring to them the heart and the understanding of Jesus. And the movie has come out, and it's caused a controversy with Christians and non-Christians alike.

It has stirred up controversy with the Jewish community. It has even stirred up envy in Hollywood. Hollywood now says, well, look at all this money that was made off this movie.

Now, maybe we should be making Christian movies. And whether they do or don't, don't hold your breath, folks. But what it did for me this last week in knowing I was coming to this meeting on Thursday night with all of these students, and these are medical students.

These aren't just anybody. These are people studying to be doctors in all the different and various departments of that particular field. These are smart people.

They had smart questions. And so I knew I was coming into an environment with people that were going to ask some rather intelligent and pointed questions. And so this last week what I did was I immersed myself into all the scriptures.

I went through Matthew, Mark and Luke and John. I got them all. I went to Isaiah 53.

I began to immerse my heart in the scriptures on the crucifixion of Christ. And, beloved, I came out on the other side so excited in my heart. I could hardly wait.

I was so full with all the Word of God concerning Jesus and the cross. I was saying, God, give me these kids today. I was so excited.

I could hardly wait to get before them and share. And I didn't preach. I promise you, my wife kept, made sure I didn't preach.

And then we just systematically answered all of their questions. But I want to talk to you about the cross. I came to one other conclusion.

The subject is too large to exhaust in one message. It seems like the whole Bible is interconnected to the cross. It's an amazing topic that the cross would become so offensive.

Why is it that the cross of Jesus causes such controversy? Why is it that it stirs up such anger, resentment? It stirs up people. There is something about the cross. You talk about the cross and it begins to stir people up.

Well, the apostle Paul, listen to a couple of scriptures what he says. In Galatians he says, God forbid that I should glory. He says, I'm not going to glory in anything else.

I tell you where my glory is. He says 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.

You see, the apostle Paul, he knew something about the cross. There's something, and all through this message tonight, I've selected. I'm telling you, I've got reams of notes at home.

So I've selected some scriptures that I want to take you on a journey tonight about the cross. The apostle Paul looked at this. He says, I'm not going to glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he understood something. He understood that at that cross, the world, with all of its allure, all of its power, all of its sensuality, everything about the world, that world was placed on that cross. He knew something.

He knew that the temptations of this world were nailed to that cross. And he says, I'm also nailed to the cross. So the world is crucified to me and I'm crucified to the world.

There's a truth there, and he begins to explore it. In 1 Corinthians 1, verse 18, he says, For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. No wonder we've got controversy, because those that are perishing don't understand it.

And it's foolishness to them. Why make a movie for two hours or whatever on the death of this man called Jesus who lived maybe 2,000 years ago? It's foolishness to them that perish. But unto us who are saved, it's the power of God.

To us that believe on Him and love Jesus with all of our heart, the cross is the power of God. There's a power in the cross that when it comes into my heart and my life and when I understand it, I understand that there is a power of God in this cross. I want to understand it.

I want to know what this power is. I want to know what this, that God has for us in this called the cross. Why the cross? Philippians, the apostle Paul writes and says that he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

But why the cross? Well, Ephesians tells us this, and he begins, see, you've got to understand that he actually is telling us, the scriptures will tell us why the cross if we take the time just to look them up. He says in Ephesians chapter 2, it says, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. So he's saying at one time there was a Jewish people and they had access to God.

Well, a high priest had access to God one time once a year. He could go into the Holy of Holies and have access to the presence of God. And he says, but the time has come, and he talks about this in Ephesians, that he says, it's not going to be just enough for one man to go into the presence of God, but he says, I'm going to take all the Gentiles, everybody in the world who would ever believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he says, I'm going to reconcile them all that anybody, anywhere, anytime who believes in me can have access to God.

That's the power of the cross. The cross gave us the opportunity that we could all have access to the very presence of almighty God. In Colossians, let me read this to you in Colossians.

In Colossians chapter 1, if you want to turn there, verse 19. Well, verse 13 says, who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Verse 19, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 19 says this, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. By him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And you, and you that were sometimes alienated, separated, apart from God, an alien.

And I know what it means to be an alien, because I was born in Africa. I'm an alien in this country. I'm not green, but I'm an alien.

I had to take out citizenship by coming into this country. I understand what it means to be alienated. It doesn't matter how long you are in this country.

If you're not born here, it's very hard to integrate. To this day, I'm an African. I was born in Africa, but I'm now a citizen of this country.

But I'm getting to know this country, and I love it. So the same thing, this is what Paul is saying here in the Colossians. He says, you were alienated.

You were an alien to the things of God. You were green at one time. You didn't belong to the things of God.

He says, you were alienated. Enemies in your mind by wicked works. You didn't choose God, He chose you.

It wasn't one day you woke up and said, I got a good feeling towards God. I hope I'll find Him when I go looking for Him. No, the Bible doesn't say that.

It says that you were alienated. You were an enemy of God. You were an enemy in your mind by wicked works.

Yet now, even in that time when you were an enemy of God, He says, but yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight. That's the power of the cross. So that's what He says in Colossians.

You know why the devil hates the cross being preached? Because it's on the cross that his kingdom was plundered. It was on the cross. The Bible says if you turn over in Colossians, look at this in chapter 2 verse 13.

This is what it says in Colossians 2 verse 13. You see, the devil doesn't want you to preach the cross. Because he knows it was on that cross that his kingdom was plundered.

Every force and power that he could muster up was destroyed and broken on the cross of Christ. That's why he doesn't want it preached. Verse 13 says, in chapter 2 verse 13 says, And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened? He says, there was a time you were so dead, you were dead in your sins.

But Christ came and He hath quickened you together with Him. He says He came and made alive. You see, the devil doesn't want the cross to be preached.

Because in the power of the cross, it takes men and women who are dead in sins. And God says, I'll come and quicken you, make you alive. Make you a brand new person, something that you could never be in your own strength.

God says, I can do that. Hallelujah. That's why He doesn't want it to be preached.

It's a powerful message. But it goes on to say, And He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. Everything that was written that condemned me.

He says He's blotted that out against us. Which was contrary to us. And He took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.

And look at verse 15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. So you see, the devil doesn't want the cross to be preached.

Because he was made an open show where every power and principality was spoiled by Christ. You know what that means to us today, beloved? He was stripped of all authority and power and rendered useless. The devil has no weapon that can be formed against you, can ever prosper again in your life.

Hallelujah. So when they put those nails in that cross, when they were putting it through His hands and they were nailing Him to the cross, you know what Jesus was declaring to the world? Every beat of that hammer in those nails in my hands, every stripe on my back is a declaration that every power and principality that the devil has ever used to hold you captive is now being spoiled. Hallelujah.

Oh, tell you, I got excited about the cross. The cross is awesome. Listen to what Isaiah says.

Isaiah says this. Listen to the affliction that came upon Christ. Surely He hath borne our grief.

There's times of grief. He's carried our sorrows. Yet we have seen Him stricken, smitten, afflicted.

He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

And with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to His own.

And the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Every last one of us, everything that we have ever done wrong, it was taken and placed upon Christ. He was oppressed.

He was afflicted. Yet He opened Noddy's mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep before her shearers is done, so He openeth Noddy's mouth. His visage was so marred more than any other man. And He's formed more than the sons of men.

So, beloved, that's why the devil doesn't like the cross to be preached. Because in the cross, he took my sins. In the cross, he broke the power of hell.

Oh, if that can just get into our spirit. Oh, the devil can bark, he can yell, he can scream, he can shout, he can lay a trap for you. But I want to tell you, no weapon formed against you can ever prosper again.

All the saint has to do is to say the name Jesus. All you have to do is rise up and say, devil, in Jesus' name. I don't care what you're doing right now.

I don't understand it. I don't need to understand it. All I need to know is Colossians tells me that all your power was spoiled at the cross.

Isn't that exciting, beloved? So, what I did was, in the study, I took the seven statements that Christ made. I went through all the scriptures and there are seven statements that Jesus makes upon the cross. From the time that they nail Him to the time that it's over, He makes seven statements.

And let me tell you those real quickly. Now, Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock in the morning. And by a little after three o'clock in the afternoon, He was dead.

He had yielded up His own life. But at nine o'clock in the morning, when the Bible tells us when they nailed Him to the cross, Luke is the one that brings it up. In Luke chapter 23, verse 34.

Don't turn there, let me just read it to you. It's when they first nail Him to the cross. These are the words that Jesus utters when He is first placed on the cross.

This is the first statement that Jesus makes on the cross. Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them. The very first statement.

The very first thing that He proclaims as they nail Him to the cross. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That's at nine o'clock in the morning, a little after nine o'clock in the morning.

Luke continues to say that the next statement that He makes is this conversation between the two thieves. And Jesus was placed right in the middle of these two thieves, showing us this is what the gospel is like. That Christ will always be presented to this world and there's going to be people who will reject Him.

Both rejected Him, but there was one who turned. And this is what it's going to always be like. You'll always find those that will reject Him and go to hell.

There'll be those that will accept Him and go to heaven. And that will find paradise. And so the second statement that Jesus makes upon the cross is verse 43.

In Luke 23, He says, Verily I say unto thee, Listen to the thief that says, Lord, will you remember me when you come in your kingdom? And Jesus says to him on the cross, He says, I tell you, I say unto you, today. And actually in the Greek it literally means right now, at this very moment of time. It doesn't mean later on, but the English says today.

But Jesus in the original language actually makes that there and then. He was experiencing the touch of heaven upon Him. He says, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

The third statement in John is found in John. This is in a chronological order. This is what's taking place.

And in John chapter 19, He looks down and there is His mother. And He says, Mother, behold thy son. Then He saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother.

Fulfilling His scripture in Psalm 68, God saideth to solitary and families. Apostle John takes her into his home from that time onwards, the scripture tells us. But it's very interesting, at that third point of His conversation on the cross, these are the seven statements of Jesus on the cross, that at this point in time, it's about 12 o'clock, it's noon.

He's been on the cross for three hours. And from 12 o'clock noon to 3 o'clock, this is what the Bible says. It says in Matthew chapter 27, verse 45, if you go back to Matthew, verse 47, or verse 45, chapter 27, verse 45, Now from the sixth hour there was darkness all over the land unto the ninth hour.

So in other words, from the top of the hour to the ninth hour, which is 3 o'clock, there was darkness. Mark chapter 15 says the same thing. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land.

Luke 23, verse 44 says it was about the sixth hour, and that there was darkness all over the earth until the ninth hour. And it's an amazing thing, right in the middle, He makes these three statements, and then for three hours, there is this darkness that comes upon the whole face of the whole earth, or over the whole land, as Mark says it, Luke says, darkness over the whole earth. And all the writers are silent about this darkness.

There's a silence about it. After 3 o'clock, after the three hours, then you go back and you can see in Matthew, the fourth statement, Jesus emerges after three hours of this darkness, and He says, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me? And then John chapter 19 follows the fifth statement, and He says, I thirst. There's a thirst in His heart.

And then in John chapter 19, verse 30, He makes that most profound statement on the cross, when He says, It is finished. And then Luke closes the chronological statements of Christ when He says, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit, and Jesus dies. And so you've got this six hours that Jesus is on the cross, and you've got these first statements where He's dealing with these people on either side of Him, and His mother, and John, and then there's these three hours of darkness, and He emerges, and He says, Why hast thou forsaken Me? I thirst, it is finished, and into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

This intrigued me as I was studying up the scriptures on this, and I began to wonder, well God, what is this darkness? What was the heaviness that was come upon Him? And I went back to Isaiah, it's the griefs, it's the sorrow, the stricken, the smitten, that word darkness means, literally it means in the Greek and the Hebrew, that which is chaotic, that which has come, and the cause of sin. So there's this tremendous darkness that is upon the earth, and that Christ is in that particular time, and none of the writers writing about this three hours of darkness. There's no statement what is taking place there, and I began to dig around.

I said, God, what is this darkness? Now listen to me, in Genesis, I'm going to help you today on a thought that God put into my heart. In Genesis chapter 1 it says, And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the earth. Until what time? Darkness was on the face of the earth.

The word darkness in the Hebrew language literally means misery, falsehood, ignorance, that which separates, chaotic, void, without form. So darkness, we see right back in Genesis, covers the earth. Until what time? Until what time? There's this darkness that's covering the earth, and we understand the misery, the falsehood, the ignorance, until the Spirit of God begins to move on the face of the waters.

See, darkness can only stay as long as there's the absence of the presence of God. But when the presence of God comes, when the power of the Holy Ghost is there, when the Holy Ghost shows up, when God begins to speak, the Bible goes on to say that it is God who spoke and light came into being. You see, God divides light from darkness.

When the light comes, there's a divide. You cannot get rid of darkness in your soul. There's no way that you can get rid of any part dark in your heart.

You can try, you can go to counselors, you can take drugs, you can go to institutions, you can do anything you like, you can walk on your head. It doesn't matter what you try to do. The darkness stays until the Spirit of God shows up.

And in every single life where there is darkness and someone says, God, I call upon your name, and God speaks into that life, light takes its course. Isn't that awesome? And see, darkness is covering the face of the earth, over all the earth at this time for three hours. Jesus said this in the Garden of Gethsemane when they came to arrest him.

When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against me. He says, I was with you all the time. Why didn't you try to take me then? But then he makes a statement, but he says, but this is your hour and the power of darkness.

So Jesus understood that there was going to be a work of the enemy that was going to come against him. This is your hour. Take your best shot, he was saying.

This is the only shot you're going to get. The Bible says he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, and the iniquity of us all was laid upon him. Now I looked up the word stricken in the Hebrew context, and it means to come into contact with beatings, with stripes, but also with darkness.

It means to come in contact with it. So here in these three hours, it seemed like it was seemingly quiet. Nobody writes about it.

Three hours, he's hanging on the cross. What's going on with this darkness? Well, the sin of the world, the weight of that is coming upon him. I think that the enemy is trying to take a hold of his life.

He says in Acts chapter 2, the New Testament reveals the battle. He says the sun shall be turned into darkness. Colossians says he's delivered us from the power of darkness.

So we know that in this darkness that there was a power that the enemy was trying to come against Christ at. And the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not. Now, again, it simply means not just understanding, but the darkness could not seize the light and the life that was in Christ.

And it goes on, it says that we are delivered from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. But in my studies, I still was saying, God, what is going on in this three-hour period of time? And I know it was the Holy Ghost, and he led me to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2. Let me read the scripture, you know it so well. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2 says, Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

So the Hebrew writer is saying, we're going to look to Jesus, who's the beginning and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. And I thought to myself, the thought came to my mind, God, what do you mean by endured the cross? So I began to look that up, and I went to the theological book of the New Testament, of the Greek New Testament, and this is what it means. It means to wait for hostile attacks and to stand firm against them.

It also means to remain firm of that which one resists, holding out, standing fast, enduring all evils. It means to, it covers courageous, active resistance to hostile attack, and in this sense, use alongside expectation and waiting. And suddenly I began to understand, as the sin of the world was placed upon Christ, the devil tried to seize that opportunity to kill him, but he resisted that.

And he comes out, and after this period of time, he comes out of this time, and he says, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I thirst, I long for fellowship. That thirst wasn't just something to drink, it may have been, he might have been very thirsty at the time, but it has a deeper significance than that. It

means, God, I long to have the fellowship of just knowing your power and your salvation.

And then he says, it is finished, everything that God had asked him to do had come to its final conclusion. Up to that point in time, there was, I tell you, as a sword, I saw the devil trying to take his life, trying to come down against him, but our God, he wasn't just passively on the cross waiting the time out. No, he was resisting every single thing that the devil wanted to throw and try to take his life.

He resisted and would not allow it. And he comes out on the other side. That's what Colossians says, he came out of this absolutely making an open show of the devil, hallelujah.

And he says, so he was tempted in all points, and yet without sin it was placed upon him. Now let me bring you to the thought, the point of the preach tonight. That's all just by way of introduction.

Let me tell you what I think the preach is. Go back to Matthew chapter 27. This to me, I think, is the most exciting part of it all.

It's almost like, I could almost say this is the rest of the story. You've got this first beginning nailed to the cross. He's dealing with this thief and that thief and his mother and John and then this three hour period of darkness.

And then he emerges from that and he makes the rest of his statements. But the moment that he yields up his own life, Jesus laid down, he said, no man taketh my life from me. I lay it, I have the power.

God has given me this command that I can lay my life down and I will take it up again. And so we see that Jesus lays down his own life. And the moment that he gave up the Holy Ghost, he gave up the ghost, the father intervened.

See, the blood of the righteous lamb had atoned for sin. He said it's finished. All the legal requirements that God had required of him had been met.

And God in all his power and glory was now free to act. And see, I just love it. This is the pinnacle of the whole power of the cross is that God is waiting.

And as soon as Jesus says it's finished and he yields up his life, the lamb of God was slain. He's given up his life. He's now that God is free to act because the legal requirements of the law were all met in Jesus Christ.

Now, look what God comes back and does. Pick up the story now with me in verse 50, chapter 27, verse 50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

So he's now dead. This is like three o'clock in the afternoon, a little after three o'clock. And verse 51, number one.

You see, God is almost like saying to the devil, Devil, you can have your three best hours at my son. You better do the best that you can, three hours all you get. If you think that's power, if you think that's a lot of power and principality, I'm about to show you what true power is.

I just see the father just waiting to say, you want to know what true power is, devil? I just know that this is the law of God has been waiting for all eternity, for this very moment in time. Verse 51, number one. Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

So number one, God says, you try to keep my people from me. You caused man to sin in the beginning. You try to separate man and get them into hell.

I want to show you something today, devil. I'm separating, this curtain that separates man from my presence. God says, number one, never again will man be not allowed to come into my presence.

From today onwards, any person who believes on my son can come into the presence of almighty God. He says, this is what I'm going to do, devil. See if you've got power to stop this.

Rip, and he opens up the way into the holy of holies. And the invitation to every single person who would believe on the son of God is, come on into my presence. Can you imagine that we who are wicked and our hearts desperately wicked, God says, because you received my son and he nailed your sins to the cross, you tonight can come into the presence of a holy God.

Devil, that's power. You cannot hold one of these people back again. Never again will you ever hold them back from my presence.

Boom, he opens up the way into the holy of holies. Beloved, do you know what that means? I leave the church tonight and when I'm walking home and I'm walking down the street, I say, oh Jesus, I love you. God, I thank you that you care for me.

And God says, oh I love you, I care for you too. We're talking to a holy God. We have a relationship with the eternal God who made the heavens and the earth.

He says, you can come into my presence, you can love me, you can talk to me. Never again, bored. Don't let the devil lie to you that your sin can keep you out.

You confess that and call on the name of Jesus, you come right into the presence of almighty God. Hallelujah. Number two.

So he opens up the way, I just love it, it gets better all the time. Come into my presence. And then number two, he says, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent.

Let me tell you, beloved. Yeah, the earth shook and the rocks broke and split. But you know what speaks to me? Every hard heart, every conflict that has held you in captivity, God will shake it loose.

He says, devil, you think you've got power to hold them? I've got power to shake it loose. You think you can bind them? I've got power to loose them out of those prisons. Paul and Silas at midnight and God gives an earthquake and everything shakes and these men come out free.

You see, beloved, God will take the hard, stony heart and he'll break it in pieces. He says, you hardened their heart, I give them a new one. Hallelujah.

So it doesn't matter. The temple is opened up, they can come into my presence. But more than just coming into my presence, I'm going to give them a brand new heart.

Ezekiel says, I'm taking out the heart of stone and I'm giving them a heart of flesh. Hallelujah. It gets better even more than that.

And then he goes on to say, listen to this, I just love this. Can you imagine being there with the disciples and all those people round about and you're standing and walking maybe on an unmarked grave and suddenly this thing begins to open up. The graves open up.

The Bible tells us at that particular time, the graves begin to open up of all those who had loved the Lord and died. And they came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. So here were all the saints that had died in the past and all these graves opening up.

He says, devil, you want to see power? That which is dead, I'm going to make alive. You can try to kill them, I'm going to make them alive. You can condemn them, but I'm going to put life into them.

I'm going to quicken them. I'm going to give them resurrected life. They're going to come into my presence.

I'm going to give them a brand new heart of flesh. And more than that, I'm going to give them resurrected life. They're going to have the life of my son living within them.

And I tell you, it's going to quicken their mortal bodies. Hallelujah. You try to kill them, God's going to give them life.

And then the last thing that he does that I think is marvelous, which we have today, is he says, And they feared, and look at verse 54, Now when the centurion and they that were with him were watching Jesus, Saw the earthquake and those things that were done, They feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God. You see, beloved, the greatest power on the earth today is this, That the name of Jesus will be proclaimed. The name of Jesus.

You see, the devil tried to rub out the name of Jesus. He tried to take that name of Jesus down. But in the last of what takes place on this resurrected time, This moment in time, when he's on the cross, This is what it says.

And they said, Truly, this is the Son of God. There came a recognition that Jesus is God. Jesus is God.

Jesus is God. That whenever I say the name Jesus, We're not just talking about a name of a person. We're talking about the name of the Son of God.

That in His name, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess at the name of Jesus. There is now no weapon, there's nothing that can hold me back. God has opened the way into His presence.

And every single person who calls on the name of Jesus shall be saved. You call on the name of Jesus, you shall be saved. You shall be saved.

Hallelujah. Delivered. Set free.

Not bound. New heart. New life.

Presence of God. Every person who calls on the name of Jesus shall be saved. Shall be.

Shall be saved. Shall be saved. You shall.

You shall. You shall be saved. You shall be saved.

It doesn't matter what lie the devil says. You shall be delivered. Set free.

And the presence of God come in. Resurrected life. Take over death.

Hallelujah. That's why He said the cross. The cross is an offense to the world.

Life to you and me. Hallelujah. Let's stand together.

Glory to God. Hallelujah. You've got to struggle tonight.

You come say the name Jesus at this altar tonight. And you watch the chains broken and the doors open and life come where there's death. Father, thank You tonight for the cross.

An offense to the world. But power to those that believe. Now God, I'm believing tonight that You, the God who shook the mountains and an earthquake came and broke the rocks.

That You are going to do the same tonight. For every person who comes to this altar and calls on the name of Jesus shall be saved. In Jesus' name.

You come. If God spoke in your heart, just step out. And you come to the altar.

You call upon the name of Jesus. And I'm telling you tonight, you will be touched by His power. And I've got some psalms I want to read to you tonight in closing.

So you come and I've got a word for you tonight. Hallelujah. Praise God.

Let me read some psalms to you. The equivalent, the Old Testament equivalent when Jesus said, when in Hebrews where it says that He endured the cross. It wasn't passive, folks.

It was active. And the Old Testament equivalent of this powerful word is, it actually is two words. It's the word trust and the word wait.

It's the Old Testament equivalent to this word endure. So while He was on the cross and the enemy was trying to come against Him. There was a trust in the Father.

And there was a waiting for the power and the salvation of His Father to come through. It was going to happen. Let me read some scriptures to you tonight.

As you come to this altar and you say, I want to put my trust in Jesus tonight. Well, let me tell you what you're going to be getting. Psalm 25.2 says, Oh my God, I trust in Thee.

Let me not be ashamed. Let not mine enemies triumph over me. See, trusting in God will not allow your enemies to triumph.

Psalm 5.11 says, But let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice. Let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them. So in the moment you say, God, I put my trust in Jesus.

He says, you can begin at that very point in time. The Bible says that you can begin to start shouting for joy. You don't have to worry about how it's working out, how it's panning out.

You don't have to care anymore, because the very second that you put your life into the trust of Jesus. He says, the Bible says, let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them. It's like in the past tense,

it's already been done in other words.

You can begin shouting tonight, because you put your trust in the Lord. Oh Lord, my God, in Thee do I put my trust. Save me from all them that persecute me and deliver me.

Let me read one more to you. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation. On Thee do I wait all the day.

You see, to the rest of the world, those three hours of darkness. It looked like just to them, nothing was happening. There's nothing written about those three hours.

But Jesus trusted in the Father. And the moment that He came out of that time and He says, God, it's finished. I give it to you all.

And God comes through and the power of God is demonstrated. That's why we can rejoice. Now you pray with me tonight.

Lord Jesus, I take up the name, Jesus. For Your name means Jehovah is Savior. You are my Savior.

And in You do I put my trust. You put your trust in the Father. And He came through.

Tonight, Lord Jesus, I put my trust in You. I'm not going to look to my circumstances. I'm not going to look to the attack.

The devil can scream and yell. But this night, I put my trust in Jesus. And the Bible says I can shout with joy knowing that my God will defend me.

And Lord, I thank You that tonight, no weapon that is formed against me will prosper. But Your name will defeat my enemies. Now let me pray for you.

Lord Jesus, I believe with all of my heart that the Apostle Paul knew the power of the cross. He saw that on that cross, not only was my sin nailed to it. Everything, everything, all sin was nailed to that cross.

He took it from me. It was nailed there. But Lord, also every power and every principality, every attack, every work of hell, every breath of the devil that He would try to utter against us was absolutely spoiled on the cross.

Now, Lord Jesus, tonight we receive it and we believe it. And we begin to shout. We begin to shout in our heart, Lord, tonight.

Our God is an awesome God. Hallelujah. Glory to God.

Just give Him thanks tonight, beloved. Tell Him tonight He's an awesome God. You're an awesome God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. You're an awesome God.

This is the conclusion of the message.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/neil-rhodes/the-offense-of-the-cross/>

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