

THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

by Carter Conlon

Is your life divided? Are you gripped by the fear of man? Do you have a deep sense of self-loathing? If you have experienced any of these struggles in your life, you have probably tried and failed to overcome them through your own strength. Year after year you have come into the house of God looking for relief, but still find yourself in bondage. Your testimony for Christ has become ineffective, so you ask yourself the question, "When will the breakthrough come?" I believe it can come by the end of this message which the Lord has given me for you.

Christians in our generation live far beneath their inheritance because they have no desire to bear the reproach of Christ. In many cases, they are actually a detriment to the cause of Christ. How is this possible when Romans 6:14 tells us that sin does not have dominion over the true believer? Now this does not mean the Christian has no more struggles or temptations, but it does mean the power of sin has been broken; first, by the blood of Christ, and second, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. If this is true, why are so many in the professing church of Jesus Christ still under the dominion of sin? It could be because there are so few who are willing to identify themselves with what the reproach of Christ really meant. In the scriptures, we read how Jesus in His passion, suffered insults, abuse and disgrace. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:12, 13 KJV).

■ THE FIRST DISCIPLES WERE NOT DIVIDED

The first believers were a marked group. It was not popular to be a Christian. They were well aware of the bloodlust of the masses who had just crucified the Son of God. In Acts chapter 2, the disciples were gathered with one hundred and twenty people in the Upper Room waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came into the room, they were all filled with power and immediately went back into the streets with boldness. These once fearful followers of Jesus stepped out of obscurity and hiding to embrace the reproach of Christ. God came and walked with them and honored them. The disciples spoke of the wonderful works of God with incredible power. Those gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost could only say that these people had been with Jesus.

■ A TYPE OF THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

There was a man named Mephibosheth, who was the grandson of King Saul. He was dropped by his nursemaid as a baby and was lame in both his feet. Years earlier King David had made a covenant with Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father, to take care of his family when David became king. David had heard that a descendant of Jonathan was still alive and summoned him to come and dwell in his own court. When Mephibosheth arrived at King David's palace "...he fell on his face and did reverence" (2 Samuel 9:6 KJV). He typifies the sinner who prostrates himself before Christ seeking salvation. Do you remember

the day you first understood you were a sinner and in need of God? Whether you did it physically, or in your heart, you truly did fall on your face before the Lord in reverence. Your pride was broken and you confessed with your mouth that you were in need of a savior.

This is the promise of God to you; He will restore everything the enemy has taken away from you.

■ FULL RESTORATION

King David, a type of Christ, reached out to Mephibosheth and said to him, "Don't be afraid! I've asked you to come so that I can be kind to you because of my vow to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the land that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you may live here with me at the palace." (2 Samuel 9:7 New Living Translation). It is incredible, for here Mephibosheth was invited to sit at the king's table. It was common knowledge that anyone who had some kind of blemish was not permitted into the king's presence. Yet here was this man who was lame in his feet, sitting at the king's table, just as you are able to sit at God's table and eat bread with the King of Kings. The tablecloth covered his lameness, as the blood of Christ covers all sin and weakness. Mephibosheth in his lameness was fully accepted by the king, and David restored to him all his family had lost. This is the promise of God to you; He will

restore everything the enemy has taken away from you.

■ MAN OF THE FLESH

“Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba and said, ‘I have given your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and servants are to farm the land for him to produce food for your master’s household. But Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, will eat here at my table.’ [Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants]” (2 Samuel 9:9 NLT).

During the previous reign, King Saul, had a servant by the name of Ziba. This man was corrupt and sought only for his own well-being; he distinctly typifies our sinful nature. Ziba wanted the inheritance of his former king which was now given to Mephibosheth. In exactly the same way our old nature wants the inheritance of God without submission and hardship. The old nature wants everything God has without the requirements He asks of us.

■ KEPT IN SUBMISSION BY THE WORD

Ziba, had 15 sons and 20 servants, and was more established and certainly more powerful than the lame Mephibosheth; Ziba could have easily overpowered him and taken the inheritance by force. So what stopped him from taking the inheritance from Mephibosheth? This is an important principle you need to understand today. He could not overpower Mephibosheth because he was kept in submission and made to be a servant by the word of the king. Look at Ziba’s words to King David: *“Yes, my lord the king; I am your servant, and I will do all that you have commanded” (2 Samuel 9:11 NLT).*

In exactly the same way our old nature wants the inheritance of God without submission and hardship.

The Apostle Paul talked expressly about this inner struggle that goes on between our spirit and flesh. *“I don’t understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate.... When I want to do good, I don’t. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway” (Romans 7:15, 19 NLT).* Now some people never get beyond this struggle and are reduced to doing things they don’t want to do. Paul was simply stating there is a power of corruption within the life of a person. God has spoken His word over this corruptible man, just as King David spoke to Ziba. Christ has declared that you are no longer under the dominion of sin; the old nature cannot govern your life anymore. He might be more powerful than you are, but there is one in you that is greater than he who is in the world. Paul went on to thank God for his victory through Jesus Christ. *“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death” (Romans 8:1, 2 NLT).*

■ DAVID’S REPROACH

In a sudden moment of unrest and rebellious uprising, David our Christ-type was forced to leave the city of Jerusalem. *“David went up by the ascent of the mount of Olivet and he wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up” (2 Samuel 15:30 KJV).* David crossed the Kidron valley weeping, suffering insults, abuse and disgrace. He was aware that he carried upon himself the reproach of a judgment because of his past sin with Bathsheba. In the beginning of this message we referred to Hebrews 13:12; it spoke of Jesus, how He carried the full weight of the reproach of our sin to Calvary. Jesus had to go

outside of Jerusalem and He went out with sorrow in His heart, much in the same way David did long ago.

Christ has declared that you are no longer under the dominion of sin.

■ AN OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF A DIVIDED LIFE

In continuing this Old Testament example I want to illustrate just how a person can become ineffective and divided. Now, folks, this is the most important part of the message. There were those who loved David; even when it seemed his reign was out of season, he was still their anointed king. Those who were loyal went with him outside of the city; they could not stay in a place of rebellion. There were others, however, who were not willing to risk the reproach of what it meant and the cost of going with David, and therefore remained in the city. These people were of a divided heart and were unwilling to follow King David whole heartedly.

■ CONFRONTATION WITH A DIVIDED LIFE

When David did return to Jerusalem, after defeating the rebellion, Mephibosheth came out to meet him. *“And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?” (2 Samuel 19:24, 25 KJV).* David then said a curious thing to Mephibosheth and Ziba; he told them to divide Mephibosheth’s inheritance. Now why would David tell this man, who was once invited to his palace to dine with him at his table, to divide his inheritance with this corrupt man?

I have often thought when reading this that David must have been tired or it was a huge misjudgment. Actually, it shows incredible discernment on David's part when you see him as a type of Christ, and a believer who has a divided heart.

This Old Testament picture speaks to me of two things: First, difficult days are quickly coming our way; we are going to have to make a decision to go all the way with Christ during the hard times when it is not popular to be a Christian. Jesus, however, has promised to carry you and sustain those who belong to Him. He will come repeatedly to those who are His, encouraging them in their relationship with Him.

Second, the difficult times will challenge your very loyalty to Christ. We see this when King David questioned Mephibosheth's loyalty to him. Mephibosheth had conveniently positioned himself between two kingdoms during David's trial.

David asked Mephibosheth, "Why did you not go with me? I had to leave Jerusalem and go outside the gate; I was in a place that was not popular in society; I was in a place that only those who truly loved me can go. I was kind to you, I covered you, and I brought you to my table. I commanded this corrupt servant in your house to be in submission to you. But when the difficulties came and you were called to go with me into a place of weeping and misunderstanding and bear my reproach, you stayed at home." Mephibosheth answered him, in essence saying, "I did not bathe, or wash my feet or trim my beard. In fact, I did not even wash my clothes. I knew you were in a hard place so I waited for you here until you returned to reestablish your kingdom." He gave the impression to King David that he was holding out for David's

kingdom to be rebuilt. Instead of following the king on a hard journey, he chose to stay amongst a rebellious kingdom. However, if David's rebellious son had won the victory, Mephibosheth would have made a similar statement to him: "I was waiting until you established your kingdom before trimming my beard and washing my face." You can see how he had strategically positioned himself right in the middle, hoping to have the best of both worlds.

Beloved, going with Christ into hard places is not optional; there is no way around it. Mephibosheth with a divided heart began to make excuses. "Well, my servant lied to me, he deceived me." Can you imagine when Christ comes back and looks at you and asks, "Why didn't you go with Me?" The excuses would start to flow, "Well, you know, my father wounded me; my past and my background were terrible; you knew how hard it was for me growing up. I could not do anything."

I believe the cry of God's heart for so many of His people when He returns will be, "Why did you not go with Me? Why were you not willing to share the reproach of My Son in a world that hates God and hates those who truly represent Him?" Elijah said it this way to those who were living a divided or compromised life: "*How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him*" (1 Kings 18:21 KJV). Are you playing both sides of the fence, claiming to love God, and going to church with a display of devotion, yet going home and having the same devotion to the things that offend the very nature and character of God?

In fact, it is because of this kind of division the church is powerless and why there is so little victory today. This is why people sit in their houses week after week, year after year,

nursing and nurturing old wounds. They live behind prison bars, never experiencing freedom. Sin has dominion over them, because they have positioned themselves directly between two kingdoms, they are divided in heart. For this reason the church has become a non-issue in this society. The voices of men and women of God are no longer heard in the streets as on the Day of Pentecost. "Yes, I want to go to heaven, but I want everything religion and the world has to offer me, I want both sides of the coin at the same time." Because David discerned Mephibosheth's divided heart, he ordered him and Ziba to carve up the inheritance. People with divided hearts always lose the best God would have for them; they end up with only part of their inheritance. I would rather die than live this kind of Christianity.

I believe the cry of God's heart for so many of His people when He returns will be, "Why did you not go with Me?"

■ LET US GO UNTO HIM

We need to wholeheartedly follow Christ. Hebrews 13:13 says, "*Let us go therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.*" If we are going to be a church that has a testimony in our generation, we have got to go outside of the camp. We need to go outside, away from all religion that lives only for itself, and uses God for its own gain; a religion that seeks its own reputation and power over men's lives. Think of Jesus for a moment as He is taken outside the gates of Jerusalem. The whole religious system has now shunned Him and is about to nail Him to a cross. He goes willingly as a servant, bearing the reproach of carnal man's scorn. Jesus was the greatest person who

walked among us, yet the scriptures tell us He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant. We are living in a society that is calling evil good and good evil. God help us to get out of this mixture and take a stand for Christ in our generation.

People with divided hearts always lose the best God would have for them.

ALIVE SPIRITUALLY

“They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: “The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus” (Acts 5:40–42 NLT). The apostles were beaten, and commanded not to speak concerning Jesus, but they rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Victory comes when you are willing to be led by the Spirit of God and to stand up in a crooked and perverse world. Do not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. Folks, there is nothing to be gained when you are living halfway between the will of God and things of this world. I want to challenge you, if God is God, follow Him. Don’t be found standing between two opinions.

PRISON DOORS OPENED

If you have found yourself divided in heart and do not have true freedom in your life, it is time for you to step out into the marketplace and begin living boldly for God; He will open your prison doors and set you free. Stand up for truth! Do not cower down under the spirit of this age. There will be nothing that can hold you back except compromise. God will set you free. *“...[They] laid their hands on the apostles, and they put them in the common prison, but the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:18–20 KJV).* It is to these people that the word of the Lord comes as a messenger and opens their prison doors.

In closing, I want to share a song that the Lord gave me a while back about this particular passage of scripture.

The Lord is my shelter, I shall not fear what man can do unto me. I have no continuing refuge here, just Jesus and love so free.

Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips to his name. Jesus Christ yesterday, today, forever, and evermore will be the same.

We have a city that cannot be shaken, and everyone ever walked free Always protected, never forsaken, one day it’s Him we’ll see.

Carter Conlon
 March 11, 2007
 ©2007 Times Square Church

This message is an edited version of a sermon given in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website www.tscnyc.org or calling 1-800-488-0854. You can also write to: Times Square Church, Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without written permission from Times Square Church.

CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

Founding Pastor
 David Wilkerson

Senior Pastor
 Carter Conlon

Tel:
 212-541-6300

Fax:
 212-541-6415

Church Location:
 237 West 51st Street,
 Between Broadway & Eighth Avenue

Mailing Address:
 1657 Broadway, 4th Fl.
 New York, NY 10019

e-mail:
info@timesquarechurch.org

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	