

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 3 April 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Seeking the Esteem of Christ

Hebrews 11:24-26

While I was knocking on doors in an Athlone neighbourhood about ten years ago, I had a lively conversation with a man who (as I found out) was a psychologist. During the course of my conversation with this psychologist, he became increasingly angry with me, on account of my insistence that he needed Christ in his life. His face turned several shades of red as I told him that Jesus is the only Way to be reconciled to God, and that He is the only one who can give us true joy, and abundant life. By the end of the conversation, he told me, in no uncertain terms, that I had a psychotic disorder, and that I was mentally unhealthy. He told me that he would love to do an examination on me to find out why I had such a “low view of myself,” and why I felt the need to plug all my hopes, expectations, happiness, and esteem into some invisible person named Jesus.

To those who would accuse me of having a “low view of myself” because I peg my hopes upon Jesus, my answer is this: we *all* need to have a “low view of ourselves”; and we *all* need to build our lives upon Jesus of Nazareth. No one can find true joy until he abases self, and seeks to be found in Christ. “Self-esteem” is not the answer to our problems; it is the *cause* of our problems! A life built upon self-realisation, self-worth, and self-effort, will lead to misery; and it will eventually crumble. In contrast, a life built upon the “*esteem of Christ*” will be filled with a joy and peace that cannot pass away.

Moses was a man who found true joy in Christ. This may seem like a strange statement, since Moses lived 1,500 years before Christ was born; but according to the Apostle Paul, Moses esteemed the “*reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.*” As we look at **Hebrews 11** this morning, we will learn exactly what this means. It is my prayer that every one of us will stop embracing *self-esteem*, and instead embrace “*the esteem of Christ.*” The title of this morning’s message is *Seeking the Esteem of Christ.*

Read Hebrews 11:24-26.

As we’ve studied through **Hebrews 11**, we’ve seen many different characteristics, and products, of true faith. This morning, we will look at some characteristics of *Moses’* faith; and as we do so, we will learn what it means to have this “*esteem of Christ.*” The first mark of Moses’ faith is that...

I. He chose God’s name (v. 24).

Last week we talked about the faith of Moses’ parents, and about the crucial role that they played in the molding of Moses’ faith. Without question, Moses learned, from his parents, what it means to trust in Jehovah. However, there came a day when Moses had to make the decision to place His *own* personal faith in Jehovah as His Redeemer. There came a day when he personally had to choose whether or not to receive God’s free gift of salvation.

When did that point come in Moses’ life? I don’t know. It must have come at a very early age, before he went off to the palace--very possibly, before he turned 5 years old. He would not have been able to stand against the pagan doctrines and the hedonistic pleasures of the Egyptian palace if he had not already placed His faith in Jehovah.

However, there came a day, in his adult years, when Moses' faith in Jehovah was no longer a relatively private matter. When he "*was come to years*," he had to make a life-altering decision—the decision of whether he would be "*called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*." In short, he had to declare by what name he would be called.

What is in a name? Plenty! For Moses, to be called the "*son of Pharaoh's daughter*" was to identify himself with *Pharaoh's* name. What would this have meant for Moses? On one hand, it would have meant a brilliant future (in *this* world). Had he chosen to identify himself with Pharaoh's name, he would have been firmly ensconced in the royal household. With the natural abilities God have given him, he might have gone far, too. If any of this was bothersome to his conscience, he could have rationalized it by saying that he would, *in private*, honour the true God, even though he had publicly chosen to identify with Pharaoh's name, and Pharaoh's gods.

However, Moses knew that he could not play such games. To be sure, God *had* placed Moses in Pharaoh's court; but the reason that God had placed him there was not that he might pursue his own ambitions, and be successful in the world's eyes. Rather, God placed him there so that he might be equipped to do *His* will. For Moses, there could be no other option than to do God's will. As a man who desired to live by faith in God, he *could not* choose to be called by Pharaoh's name.

So, then, what name *did* Moses choose to be called by? Paul tells us that he chose to identify with "*the people of God*"—the Hebrews. Was it an *ethnic* name that he chose? Was it the name "Hebrew" that was important to him? No, it was far more than that!

Look again at what Paul said about Moses in **verse 24**. Did he say, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of *Israel*"? No, he said, "*choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God*." In choosing to suffer with the Hebrews, Moses chose to be called by *God's* name. The Hebrews are *God's* people; and God has called them by *His* name!

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Israel, as a nation, is called by the name of Jehovah. The name "Jehovah" is attached to Israel by virtue of the Covenant that God made with them on Mount Sinai. As New Testament Christians, we are called by God's name, as well--by virtue of the *New* Covenant. Particularly, we are called by the precious name of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! In the earliest days of the church age, believers were called "followers of that Way." (The "Way," of course, is Jesus!) Later, in Antioch, they began to be called "Christians"; and we have been called "Christians" ever since then. Christ is the second Person of the Godhead; and we are called by His name.

Now, stop and think about that for a moment. Every name by which God calls Himself is precious, because every one of His names reveals something about His righteous character. For a holy God to attach *His* name to *us sinners* is unfathomable! Yet, if you are saved, that is exactly what God did for you, at the moment you were saved. He placed you "*in Christ*." You bear His name. Your identity is bound up in the Lord Jesus Christ; and you are not your own. When you confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believed in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you were saved; and you were called by the name that you had confessed.

Read Revelation 3:12.

Do you realise how powerful this statement is, brethren? "*He that overcometh*" is, by definition, a Christian. According to **1 John 5:5**, an "overcomer" is a person who believes that "*Jesus is the*

Son of God.” This means that if you have believed on Jesus, and are saved, *you* are an **“overcomer,”** and *you* are the person being described in **Revelation 3:12.**

What does the Lord promise you. then? For one thing, He promises to make you a **“pillar in the temple”** of His God. This means that you are a permanent, irremovable, eternal fixture in God’s Temple. Since the “Temple” in Heaven is the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, this means that you are eternally **“in Him”**; and you cannot be removed from Him! Secondly, Christ promises to write the name of His God (God the Father), *and* the name of the city of His God (New Jerusalem), as well as your own “new name,” upon your very person! How’s *that* for eternal security? Those who come to Jesus for salvation will *never* be cast out, because God’s name is written on them!

So, what does this mean for your everyday life? It means that if you are saved, everything you do, say, and think in your heart, is a testimony for His name. Whether you are being a *good* testimony or a *bad* testimony, you are a testimony, nonetheless, because you bear His name. What are *you* telling the world about God’s name by the way you live your life? How do your *words* reflect upon God’s name? Are your words kind, gentle, wholesome, and truthful, like Christ’s words? Or are they often harsh, sarcastic, angry, disrespectful, untruthful, sleazy, or off-colour? How do your *dress, entertainment, and music* reflect upon God’s name? Are your dress, entertainment, and music Christ-honouring? Or are they worldly, immodest, revealing, and sensual? How does your *attitude* reflect upon God’s name? Is it loving, forgiving, merciful, and selfless? Or is it often unloving, vengeful, unmerciful, and prideful? Do you, in essence, *deny* God’s name through your words, actions, and inward thoughts and attitudes?

Probably the most sobering example in Scripture of a Christian who denied the name of his God is that of Peter, on the night of Christ’s trial. Let’s take a look at that account.

Read Matthew 26:69-75.

It’s almost inconceivable that Peter, one of the three closest friends of Jesus, would completely deny that he knew Him, and seal his denial with profanity. Yet, before you start flattering yourself that you would never do what Peter did, chew on this thought. In **Proverbs 30:7-8**, a believer named Agur prayed, **“Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”**

Did you catch that? To have a thankless, self-sufficient attitude, and to fail to acknowledge that *God* has provided your needs for you, is to deny the LORD! How so? Because you are asserting that you don’t need the Lord’s help. In other words, to have pride in your heart is to deny God’s name. Likewise, stealing (in *any* form, including robbing God of that which belongs to Him) is the same thing as taking God’s name in vain. Why? Because you are denying that your God is Jehovah-Jireh (“The LORD will provide”). You are saying that you must *take* things in your own hands, and break God’s law, in order to get on in life.

How about the way you actually *use* God’s name in conversation? Do you always use God’s name with the highest reverence? Or do you use God’s name as verbal clutter, or as an expression of anger or cursing, the way the world does? When you are suddenly surprised or angry, do you thoughtlessly blurt out “Oh, my (---)”? If you are truly a Christian, and you do this, then you need to repent! God’s name is holy, reverend, and awful. To use His name in any other context than utmost reverence is to trample on His name!

What about the things that you allow yourself to hear, and to see? Do you sit down in front of the tube and allow some filthy, vile, godless Hollywood creep to take a pop-shot at your God's name, and to treat it like rubbish? Or do you turn off the telly, and read your Bible instead? "Oh, but, Pastor, *I'm* not using God's name that way; someone else is doing it. It's just entertainment." Oh, really? Would you allow someone to drag your spouse's name, or your child's name, or your parent's name, through the mud in your presence? To do so would be an indication that you don't love your spouse, or child, or parent, very much, wouldn't it? Why, then, would you watch a movie (or, worse yet, *pay* to watch a movie) in which God's name is used that way?

Those of you who are born again by the Word of God are called by your Lord's name. His name is written on you. Do you bear His name with happiness and joy, as Moses did? Should you be guilty of misusing your God's name—whether by your actions, your words, or your use of God's name—I have encouraging news. The same Peter who denied God's name, and used cursing to seal it, found cleansing and forgiveness; and he wrote these words many years later.

Read 1 Peter 4:14.

The first mark of Moses' faith is that he chose God's name. The second mark of Moses' faith is that...

II. He chose God's people (vv. 24-25).

(Read Hebrews 11:24-25 again.) By choosing to embrace God's people, what was Moses really doing? The answer to that question can be found in **verse 25**. In this verse, Paul makes it clear that in choosing "*the people of God,*" Moses was also *refusing "the pleasures of sin."* The "pleasures of sin" that Paul mentions may not necessarily mean gross, scandalous sin, such as sexual immorality (although it certainly could include that). Simply choosing to cast his lot with Pharaoh's people instead of God's people would have been sin for Moses!

Why would it have been sin for Moses to choose to cast his lot with Pharaoh's people? Because if he had done so, he would have been turning his back on God's will. He knew that God had put him in his unique position so that he could deliver God's people from bondage; thus, to choose Pharaoh's people over God's people would have been to reject God's will--and His very *name*. Remember, God's *name* cannot be separated from His *people*. To turn his back on God's people would have been to turn his back on God!

Has God changed His attitude about this matter of "choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God"? No, He has not. Choosing to identify with the people of God is *still* the mark of a believer who is living by faith. In fact, it is more than that. It is, simply, the mark of a *believer*!

This truth hearkens back to the whole reason that Paul wrote this epistle. Under the weight of persecution, many *professing* Hebrew Christians were forsaking Christ's assembly (the church), and were going back to apostate Judaism, which denies that Jesus is the Messiah. By doing so, they were rejecting Christ's name. Paul made it clear that those who were walking away from Christ were not saved to begin with; and he warned them that they'd better repent and turn to Christ while they still had the chance. However, to those true believers who were fainting under persecution, yet still standing fast, Paul offered words of encouragement. He reminded them that by continuing to assemble together with God's people, they were identifying with Christ.

A true believer will identify with God's people. And how does a believer in our day identify with God's people? The most important way to identify with God's people is to enter into the

membership of a New Testament church by way of baptism, and to serve the Lord faithfully within that assembly.

In **1 John 2:19**, John said that those who had gone out from them (in other words, from the local church) *“were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”* Does this mean that going to church saves you? Certainly not! Salvation is by the grace of God alone, and not by works. However, those who *have* truly been saved have new, God-given desires: and one of those God-given desires is to identify with God’s people, in the local church. **First Corinthians 12:13** says, *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (the local church), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.”* Being baptized is something that new Christians desire to do. Why? Because it brings them into the membership of Christ’s body, the local church. Drinking the cup of the Lord’s Supper is also something that new believers desire to do. Why? Because it brings them into a special spirit of unity with Christ’s body. Attending church faithfully is something that a new believer desires to do, as well. Why? Because he wants to hang about God’s people as much as he can!

Can a Christian fall out of church attendance (or be slow to join a local church)? Sadly, it is possible. When a believer stops surrendering to God daily, and starts “doing his own thing,” sooner or later, that Christian’s zeal for God’s house will begin to cool down. Why so? Because in God’s house, God’s Word is preached; and real preaching confronts and rebukes sin. A pastor’s job is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine--both in his preaching, and in his personal, one-on-one dealings with people. In fact, **Galatians 6:1** actually *commands* believers whose hearts are right with God to confront erring brothers in a spirit of humility. Purity is also maintained in the church by way of church discipline (removing a church member from membership when he is living in open, grievous, sin). None of these things is comfortable; but accountability and responsibility are necessary in Christ’s assembly. It is all part of taking your lot with the people of God.

Despite all their sins and their failures, God’s people desire to suffer affliction with the people of God. Though persecution rage *without* the church, and though Christ rebuke and chasten His people *within* His church, those who truly know Christ, and who are walking by faith, will choose the people of God over the world. Do *you* embrace God’s people?

The first mark of Moses’ faith is that he chose God’s name. The second mark of Moses’ faith is that he chose God’s people. The third mark of his faith is that...

III. He chose Christ’s reproach (v. 26).

(Read verse 26 again.) Another mark of Moses’ faith is that he esteemed (“valued”) *“the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.”* Now, to modern Western ears, this sounds over the top, doesn’t it? If Moses had gone to a modern Christian seminary, they would have told him, “You don’t *have* to forsake the world, Moses. After all, you need to ‘build bridges’ to the world, and stay ‘culturally relevant.’” They also would have taught Moses that he needed to “love himself,” and have healthy “self-esteem.” The good doctors would have straightened Moses out for sure! Of course, I’m being facetious. If Moses had *not* forsaken the world, and had *not* embraced the reproach of Christ, God would never have been able to use him.

Now, before we go any farther, we need to know what Paul means by *“the reproach of Christ.”* How could Moses, who lived 1,400 years before Christ was born, have any esteem concerning Christ, when he never saw Christ in his lifetime? Well, first of all, you must remember that Moses *did* see Christ many times--in His preincarnate form! Christ appeared to Moses in human

form on many occasions (such as the Rock of Horeb, and Mt. Sinai). Secondly, you've got to remember that Old Testament believers had far more understanding of the coming Messiah than we give them credit for. A perfect example can be seen in Abraham.

Read Galatians 3:8.

How did God "*preach the Gospel*" to Abraham, when Abraham lived 1,900 years before Christ's death, burial, and resurrection became reality? He preached it by way of an acted-out parable; and Abraham himself participated in that parable! On that day on Mount Moriah when God commanded Abraham to offer his own son Isaac as a sacrifice, but then provided a ram as a substitute, Abraham understood that the Messiah would die as the substitute for our sins. Then, when Isaac got down off the altar alive, Abraham understood the Gospel in its fulness. He understood that somehow, the Messiah would die as the perfect substitute for our sins, and then come back to life again.

Did *Moses* understand this truth about the Messiah, as well? Did *he* understand that the Messiah would suffer and die? **Hebrews 11:26** seems to tell us that he *did* understand it! What's more, he applied this truth to his life. He understood that he, too, was called to suffer the same kind of reproach and rejection that the Messiah would suffer; and he embraced that suffering. Just as Jesus was rejected by His brethren, so Moses was rejected by his brethren, as well! No matter how gracious and longsuffering Moses was with the children of Israel, they continually rebelled against him, persecuted him, and attempted to overthrow him. Yet, he continued to love them and pray for them; and he literally would have given his life for them!

None of us is in the same kind of position of authority that Moses had; but we *are* all called to suffer reproach with Christ. To be a true, born-again Christian is to suffer rejection, reproach, and persecution from the wicked world. It's just that simple. Just as Christ loved those who hated him, we are to do the same.

Do you embrace the reproach of Christ? Do you rejoice that you get to suffer for your Saviour's name? Do you esteem the reproach that you suffer for the name of Christ to be greater than the best treasures that this world can offer you? Tragically, many Christians aren't willing to suffer much, if any, reproach for the name of Christ. Somehow, we've gotten the idea that the Christian life is supposed to be filled with pleasure, comfort, ease, entertainment, and self-fulfillment. Many Christians consider showing up for church for one hour per week to be an almost unreasonable sacrifice. As for opening your mouth, and talking to someone about the Lord, and risking being laughed at, or spoken to harshly, that is *definitely* asking too much! To give up *my* ambitions, and the things that *I* love the most is *definitely* out of the question!

Are *you* willing to suffer reproach, affliction, and loss for Christ? If suffering for the Lord is out of the question for you, then perhaps you need to examine the reality of your salvation! Suffering for Christ isn't some kind of merit that *earns* you salvation; but suffering *is* what you can (and should) expect if you have chosen to receive Christ. Jesus said, "***If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.***" Taking up the cross is part and parcel of being a Christian! Those who would follow Christ *must* be willing to take up the cross of death to sin and self. **Hebrews 13:13** says, "***Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.***" To "know Christ" is to know "***the fellowship of his sufferings.***"

Read Philippians 3:10.

Moses chose God's name. He chose God's people. He chose Christ's reproach. Lastly...

IV. He chose an eternal reward (v. 26).

(Read Hebrews 11:26 again.) In this verse, we see yet one more mark of Moses' faith. Namely, *"he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."* When Moses chose to embrace God's name, and God's people, and Christ's reproach, he was seeking a reward that cannot fade away.

What, exactly, is that reward? Probably the first word that would come to our minds is "Heaven." To be sure, Heaven *is* part of the believer's reward. Yet, Heaven is only "part of the package." Was the *resurrection* what Moses was seeking? Yes, the resurrection is part of the reward, as well. In fact, the resurrection of our bodies is the very *completion* of our salvation. Yet, this, too, is only "part of the package." What, then, is the *ultimate* reward for those who choose to follow Jesus Christ? To find the answer, let's look at **Philippians 3** again.

Read Philippians 3:7-9.

Look carefully at what Paul said. What did Paul desire to "win"? He desired to win *"Christ."* *Christ* was the reward that Paul sought! Knowing *Christ* in an ever-more-intimate way was Paul's greatest desire.

In **Genesis 15:1**, God told Abraham, *"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."* Is God the reward that you seek, Christian? Is *Christ* the sum of all your desires? Heaven, crowns, the resurrection, and positions of authority in the coming Kingdom are all part and parcel of the wonderful things that we have inherited; yet, all these things are mere by-products of being *in Christ*. *He* is our exceeding great reward.

Do you value your position in Christ above all else, Christian? Is your life all about seeking "the esteem of Christ"? Every mark of *Moses'* faith was about his esteem of Christ. His choice to identify with God's **name** was all about the esteem of Christ. His choice to identify himself with **God's people** was about the esteem of Christ. His choice to suffer the **reproach of Christ** was about the esteem of Christ. His choice to pursue an **eternal reward** was about the esteem of Christ. Moses lived by faith; and the evidence of his faith was that he esteemed Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of His sufferings, above all else.

Conclusion: What do you most esteem, Christian? Perhaps the Lord is showing you that your esteem of Christ is lacking. Yes, you love Him; but not nearly enough. Perhaps you are concerned about your affairs, your comfort, and your happiness; but you are not much concerned about Christ. When you come to esteem Christ above all else, you may be assured that the world around you will think that you are "off your rocker." However, there is no joy like the joy of dying to self, and giving all to Christ. When you stop saying "I Surrender Some," and instead say, "I Surrender All"—that is when you will know true, full, abundant joy.

This morning's message has been directed mostly to those who already know Christ as Saviour. However, I must also ask this question: "Do you truly know Christ as Saviour?" Perhaps you aren't sure. If you don't know that you are on your way to Heaven, please understand this: No good work of yours can save your soul. We talked this morning about **church attendance**; but church attendance cannot save your soul. Belonging to a church is something that those who are *already* saved are expected to do, out of their love for their Saviour; but it cannot save you. We talked about the importance of **baptism**; but baptism is only for those who are already saved. Baptism cannot save you, either. *Only Jesus can save you.* He died in your place, to pay for your sin; and He offers salvation as a free gift. Your part is simply to receive that gift by faith. Will you humble yourself, let go of your own self-effort, and place your trust in Jesus? He will cleanse your life, and make you into the new creation that He wants you to be. But you must put your faith in Him. In just a moment, you will be given an invitation to receive Christ. We would be glad to open the Scriptures and tell you how you can leave this place as child of God!