

WCCC 2024

Brother Dana Congdon

Moses treasured the reproach of Christ (2)

It is a great blessing to be together for this week. I have been greatly blessed by the Word of God that has been spoken by others. Indeed I feel like our brother Godwin touched on something I would begin by emphasizing.

In the United States, and I'm sure in Canada, those who are studying the church have observed something very disheartening. It appears that the pandemic was, it appears, the final straw, that caused the whole church to tumble.

One of the greatest problems in the church, for starters, is the burnout of pastors. And in many churches, the doors are shuttering altogether. In New York City where I live, there were some very big churches that are almost non-existent. There are many young people in the present generation who are deconstructing the faith. This is the term these ecclesiologists have given to those who still believe in Jesus but want nothing to do with the Church.

Now let me say this: there are churches that love the Lord and preach the gospel, and they are still thriving and growing. But our brother touched on something that I hope you can understand on what is going on right now.

In the midst of tragic desolation of the Church, the Lord is raising up those with the testimony of Jesus. You have no idea how important it is to grasp this prophetic moment you live in. As our brother so wonderfully shared last night to give us a historic landscape to base our understanding of the present day.

Into the 19th century the Church was dying because of liberalism. Many faithful people throughout the United Kingdom still attended churches but there was no more gospel, no more holiness. But in the midst of that desolation, the Lord raised up the Brethren and changed the whole landscape of England. It is the Brethren who had the testimony of Jesus, and the Word of God was opened to them by the Holy Spirit. And they really were the ones who opened the doors to the great revivals of the 19th century; even through D.L. Moody and even through Charles Haddon Spurgeon, because the Word of God came back and brought alive that which was dead.

I am sure you have many friends in the various churches in the community that you live. And we wish them God's blessing. It breaks my heart when I see people being discouraged when they see what is happening in their own churches. It is a desolation. I hope you will see that. If the Lord opens our eyes, this is a time of desolation in which God wants to raise up a holy, a vibrant church filled with the testimony of Jesus.

I do believe this is what is going on. And I have been around 80 years, and I have been a Christian 60 years. Here in the United States, I have never seen a time like this. The tragedy! Christians are starving for the Word of God. This song that we just sang, which many of you can sing at least the chorus by memory - they don't even know what the cross was!

I was saved in a denomination. I went to a denominational college. I went to a denominational seminary. I became a denomination missionary and pastor, and I had no idea what this song was talking about. No idea! Well, I knew this much, that to bear the cross meant you preach the gospel. This is true, so I found myself in the desert where Moses was. Until my John the Baptist - aka Stephen Kaung - came along. He said, "Repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand!" So I am here as one who found his way through the desert by the grace of God.

Now we are speaking through the testimony of Moses' life. He esteemed and valued the reproach of Christ. And if the Spirit helps us, we want to dig a little deeper to what these things mean. I am sure by now your Bible opens to Hebrews automatically. Let us read a few passages, beginning with Hebrews 11:24. Here are the scriptures that speak to the reproach of Christ.

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen."
Hebrews 11:24-27 NASB1995

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;"
Hebrews 12:1-4 NASB1995

Then I would like to go to Stephen's message where he brings up Moses.

"But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us? You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?' At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush."
Acts 7:27-30 NASB1995

Our Father, we thank You this day that we follow in Jesus' footsteps. He bore the reproach for our sake. Help us to understand and enter in with an estimation of how precious it is to bear the reproach of Christ. We pray in Jesus' precious name, Amen

We are looking to running the race. And we realize that the book of Hebrews is one of those four books in the Bible that has to do with the kingdom of God. We see that in order to run the race, we must esteem the reproach of Christ. There are many worldly treasures in Egypt. I don't know if Egypt is the United States or Canada, I guess it is both.

I want you to understand something about the world. On the surface, our world is a beautiful place. Everybody that goes to work comes with smiles and says "good morning!". Most people act quite normal, although normal is getting more neurotic all the time. But you see a lot of fine people around, so we are not immediately aware of the fact that everyone is enslaved by the taskmaster of sin.

Now civilization is a way to mask our sinful state. And so when we live in this world, we think "hey it's not so bad! There are Chinese restaurants here, and many other pleasures!" But underneath all these things, there is a fishhook that the devil has got into them. "Music is beautiful!" but there is a hook that will snare you. Education is beautiful, but there is a hook that will snare you.

When I went to college I majored in philosophy. I wasn't a Christian, but I knew how to act, because everybody in the philosophy department smoked a pipe and wore a jacket. So I had a tweed jacket, smoked a pipe, and drove an MG. My other friends who majored in engineering always had a slide rule or calculator in their pocket. And a mathematician nerd knew just how to dress and what to do.

Now today, we upgrade. You know exactly how to live and what to say, because of social media. You walk down the streets of Manhattan, and everyone is walking with their phones in their faces, taking selfies at every junction. This is how you live. Full of yourselves, telling everyone who you are. And that I should be angry about this or that which I heard on social media. You know, opinions are really aborted thoughts. God forbid, that somebody should really have to think about things, they just need to believe someone else's opinion. So we have people who can't think today. But they have an opinion about everything.

"That restaurant is no good! I saw it on TikTok! Oh god of TikTok, we look to you for wisdom!"

There is a hook in every aspect of life. And that enemy, so subtle, is out to steal you and capture you, to draw you into a bondage that prevents you from serving the Lord.

Understand the context of this matter of the reproach of Christ in the book of Hebrews. First of all, you need to see things from the HPOV. This is not where you get your license for your car. HPOV - Heavenly Point Of View.

The letter to the Hebrews was written just before Judaism would be destroyed with Jerusalem and all its practices, and all its sacrifices, and all of its priests and pharisees. They would be destroyed by the Romans. God was saying through this letter to these Jewish Christians: "Thus

saith the Lord: Do not think you can escape the persecution of the reproach of Christ. You are hiding in the shadows of your old religion."

"Yes you say that Jesus is my Messiah, the Christ, but I don't want to offend the family, so I continue to hold on to the 3 big feasts a year. And we go down to the temple to offer a lamb, even though I know that Jesus is the final sacrifice. It won't do me any harm to keep doing the things in the synagogue even as I go to have fellowship in the house of somebody."

Now what happens when things get tough for people? They go back to religious superstition.

I grew up in an area of New York that was 99% Catholic. The way I knew my friends were Catholic was not by their language because they cursed like sailors. They didn't seem to have a religious or holy bone in their body. But from 2 things I could tell that they were Catholic: every Friday afternoon, my friends would disappear because they went to confession.

In the Catholic church back then, you could not take communion on Sunday unless you go to confession and confess your sins on Friday. So I looked for my friends to play some tennis, but my friends were all at church saying "Father I have sinned".

I could also tell a second thing. When times got tough - really tough - it turned out my friends had a bunch of beads called the rosary. When times got tough they got out the rosary beads and were praying these various prayers.

The Jews had their religious superstitions as well. And they thought it was ok living in the shadows, but they knew that Jesus was actually their salvation. And the writer says, "are you not willing to bear the reproach of Christ that He died for you so that you don't need the sacrifices anymore? You have been saved by the finished work. Stand up and tell your Jewish brethren that!"

Within a few years of that, the whole Jewish system was destroyed. There were no more sacrifices. What do you do at the Passover? These Christians had not been faithful to share the truth and bear the reproach of Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, you know something of the testimony of Christ. And many of our dearest American friends are born again Christians but living in the shadows. And things are going wrong and they don't know why. Now will you keep hiding, or will you share with those you love about Christ and His purpose in their lives? That is the issue right now.

In order to run the race, we have to serve. It is interesting that in both Hebrew and Greek, there is a word that has a double meaning. In these 2 languages the word "servant" also means "son". In this case, the servant is a son of his father, and that is why he is serving.

Moses was called to be a servant-son of God. And he was able to do so because he bore the reproach of Christ. Are you a son, if you do not bear the Father's reproach?

Now there are great consolations when you bear the reproach of Christ. Behold I tell you a mystery! When you run a race bearing His reproach, you never grow weary, because you are running by His resurrection life.

Brother Godwin and I are speaking about something the same. He is talking about “running the race”, and I am talking about “run the race”. Brother Godwin is like someone who has a stage coach with 4 horses ahead of it. Our brother Godwin and John are like Indiana Jones jumping on the stage coach and pushing the horses to “Go! Go! Go!”. And Daniel and I are sitting on the seat in the coach going “whoa!”.

One of us has to be right and one of us has to be wrong? No! This is the whole counsel of God. There is a “go!” and there is a “whoa!”. I have been given the honor of speaking on the “whoa!” while brother Godwin is on the horse saying “Go! Go! Go!”.

But when we go bearing the reproach of Christ, there are so many consolations. We will mention a few more in time, but here is the main one: Paul learned a secret about following the Lord. He had to ride 2 horses. He said in Philippians 3, “that I may know Him”.

The first horse you have to ride to know Him is *anastasis* - the power of His resurrection. *Anastasis* means resurrection in Greek. Paul said, “I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection”, but joined up with that horse is another horse. “I want to know Him, and I will come to know Him through the sharing of His sufferings with me.”

We don’t really know Jesus very well until we understand His sufferings because we share them with Him. The fellowship of His sufferings draw us closer to Christ than anything else. Do you really want to know the Lord? Then you will know Him in great glorious moments when His resurrection power overcomes the enemy. And you will know Him in those moments of tremendous weakness, where Paul says, “I have discovered when I am weak, then He is strong”, because He comes right next to someone who is weak.

Let’s go back and look at the reproach of Christ. Christ bore His reproach for our sins. David spoke a wonderful Messianic song of sorrow in Psalm 69. And so accurate was David’s song that it is spoken of as Christ’s. As David is crying out in Psalm 69:7, he is saying this,

"Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Dishonor has covered my face.
I have become estranged from my brothers
And an alien to my mother’s sons.
For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.
When I wept in my soul with fasting,
It became my reproach."
Psalms 69:7-10 NASB1995

But David was saying that he has such a zeal for the Lord’s house and it was his one desire; so much that he bore reproach and people made fun of him and accused him. When Jesus went in and cast out the moneylenders in the temple, this was the verse spoken of Him. “Zeal for my Father’s house”. Jesus came to build the house of God. We know from the gospel that Jesus bore our sins.

The devil had a good time with us when we were sinners. He could reproach us for our sins. "You sinner! God will never love you!" And 24/7 the accusations of Satan was the sense of guilt in our life. Our conscience was feeling the pressure of this world.

So Jesus came into this world. He could have conquered this world as a military hero. But instead He set His face for Jerusalem and bore our reproaches and the reproaches of the Jewish leaders. And the reproach of you and me when we yelled, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" We were all there when Jesus bore the reproach for our sins. Because of that He took our reproaches, and we were forgiven.

Now we are Christians. Without that reproach of sin because of the precious blood of Jesus. And for that reason the devil hates us all the more. He has come to kill, and steal and destroy. Are we willing to bear the reproach of saying "I am here because Jesus saved me"? Are we willing to go through a life that bears some trouble? Maybe we won't get the promotion. Maybe we will find some trouble here.

The thing we learn as Christians is that the world despises Christ. And many of your friends who are not Christians may act very nicely to you, but if you shared what your heart really believes, I wonder what they would think. I cannot imagine the pressure young people feel today when there are so many antagonistic people against God.

When we come back to Moses' life we see that he was willing to bear that reproach of the world. He considered his life with the Jewish people as more precious than the love of the world.

Now we want to see the reproach of Christ at a deeper level. When we last left Moses he was 40 years old and had escaped from the world of Egypt. Even though he ran into the desert of Midian for 40 years, and it may have looked like a complete waste of time. But when the Lord leads us into the wilderness it is never a waste of time.

When Stephen tells the prophetic story in Acts 7, we see that Moses' escape from Egypt is in the perfect timing of God. Listen to this in Acts 7:17. Stephen is telling how Moses' story of delivering Egypt unfolds. But again, Stephen starts from the HPOV.

"But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,"
Acts 7:17 NASB1995

So God had promised Abraham a land. As that time was approaching, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt. We see God's eternal plan unfolding in 4 stages before us.

1. First of all, Abraham's seed needed several hundred years to grow from a family to a nation. And so the families of Israel grew like crazy, and the nation grew.
2. But God had also spoken to Abraham that He was waiting for something. The Ammorites were now dwelling in the land of Canaan. And God says, "I must wait for their

iniquities to become full, so that my righteous hand can disinherit them from the land." In Genesis 15:16,

"Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.""

Genesis 15:16 NASB1995

3. And the third thing: God needed 40 years to prepare a servant-son to go down and bring the children out of Egypt.

I remember how our brother Stephen Kaung used to speak about Moses. He would always say, "We are always looking for how we are to be delivered. The Lord is always looking for 'who can I send?'"

So God was preparing in the desert His servant-son.

4. But God needed one more thing. He needed the children of Israel to cry out to Him "Help us! Help us!"

"Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them." Exodus 2:23-25 NASB1995

"Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God." Exodus 3:1 NASB1995

It is an amazing thing that God waits for His children to cry and ask Him to do what He wants to do.

But isn't it strange that finally after all these years of taskmaster bondage, they finally cry out at a time that happens to be when 40 years passes for Moses in the desert?

So the writer of Hebrews can now write, "By faith, Moses started acting". Indeed he had been called and sensed in his heart a love for his people. But 40 years ago, Moses was handsome, he was strong and smart. He ran the Olympics for Egypt. But his race, the 100m race, as a minister for God, was a total failure.

And so, believe it or not, the God that waits for servants to be willing to follow Him, said, "Whoa! Whoa! I have to send you to the desert school of Christ for 40 years first."

The book of Acts tells us in 7:30 that after 40 years, Moses began to run.

Now this is a great mystery. That God would call His servant but wait 40 years to send His servant. What a strange thing! When I was going to my denominational college, I felt the call of God to preach the gospel. I had been a Christian for one year, and I was a youth pastor out in a country church preaching the gospel, and people got saved. But God says, "Nope. 40 years in the desert for Congdon."

Why does God make us wait? Can you remember what happened to Isaiah? He saw the Lord, high and lifted up, making a call: "Who will go for Me?" What did Isaiah say? "Here am I, send me." And God said, "Amen. In 24 years."

Isaiah continued to see more and more things, but for 24 years under Jotham and Ahaz's ministry he had nothing to do until Hezekiah came along. Every Christian boy in this room - their parents are praying, "Make my son a Samuel!"

Do you remember how Samuel said, "Speak Lord, Thy servant heareth." And God said, "Now I am going to hide you in the tabernacle for another 12 years. I am going to turn you from a priest into a prophet, but I am going to hide you until it is time."

You remember what happened with David? Samuel poured the oil on David, anointing him as the anointed one of Israel. Then God said to David, "there is a cave seminary. I want you to go attend it for 15 years."

You remember Saul on the road to Damascus who cried out "Lord what do you want me to do?" What did God say? "I am going to change your name to Paul, and for 11 years I will send you to the desert and then back home to pack groceries."

Why does God want this delay? Surely Godwin, an Indiana Jones, is right in jumping on the horses and saying "Go! Go! Go!" But why does God send people into the desert when they are ready to go?

How many of you believe if Paul were allowed to minister right after his conversion would last 2 months before he would have been stoned to death? There is nothing more dangerous than sending out somebody to serve God, but they haven't been properly trained within.

Can you imagine Moses serving God at 40 years old? A soldier, a confident speaker. An architect and leader. God says, "Go! Serve my people!". What would have happened if he gotten into that wilderness and the people started murmuring? And suppose Moses went up to the mountain and said "Lord, the people are murmuring!"

What if God said - which He said - "Moses, I am going to get rid of all those people, and I am going to start afresh with you!" What would Moses then have said? He would have said "Amen!"

This is one of the great problems we have in the American Church today. Servants are sent out. They have been a Christian, 1 year, 3 years. Some of them are like crazy men going around doing all sorts of zealous things. Maybe doing more harm than good. Doing everything by natural skills.

"Son, we want you to be a preacher because you always won in debate class in school, and you tell good jokes. Or you have cool tattoos. You can work people up and get them all emotional." And we send them out, but they are not prepared.

I am going to make a statement, and I believe this with all my heart: unless the cross can do its work on the servant, he will not survive the race. In his service which he does with full intent of serving God, he builds the church by making the decisions. By pushing people. Getting angry with people. Frustrated with people. Condemning people. There are a lot of pastors who are awfully angry today. They built things by their own strength, and things are falling apart because of it.

How could Moses serve at 40 years old?

1. He never heard God.
2. He never seen God.
3. He had no idea of the ways God does things.
4. Because he is too full of himself.

How many of you are full of yourselves? Nobody raises their hands because we are all liars. We all start out full of ourselves because your momma tells you that you can do anything you want. Your momma is such a liar. You believe you can do everything; so full of yourselves.

So that is why we need the John the Baptist desert school - that He should increase and we should decrease. Egyptian wisdom and being mighty in words and deeds are not the tools for serving in the house of God.

Here is the reproach of Christ on another level. Now we must esteem the reproach of the cross in our own lives. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Every time we act out of our own sinful flesh, it is a reproach to the cross. For anybody serious about running with God: God will not allow our self-life to run the race. Until we understand the legitimacy of the cross' reproach on our self-life we will never become His servants.

And so for 40 years, the cross and the reproach of the cross, transformed Moses' life. Oh, what a day, when a servant realizes that there is nothing good in his own flesh! I can't imagine what a take-down that was for the Apostle Paul who was such a gifted man. But as you see in the Bible, the wilderness is a life of the cross. It is the undoing of our natural strength. It is the pouring out of our pride, our anger, our desire to control things. Our humiliation.

Can you imagine the best years of Moses' life? 40-80. That sounds like the best years of life. What a waste. Waiting. Decreasing. Praying. Dying. Losing strength. Forgetting how to speak, except to sheep. Stripping of his soldiering ability. Reduced to the most despised job of an Egyptian - being a shepherd. And even getting bit by sheep. What a humiliating life.

But any serious servant of God has to go through a time of discipline of the Holy Spirit. It is right at this point that you find that real called servants of God resist the cross the most. A servant cannot endure in the race by his own strength. There must be an exchange of life, where Christ becomes the strength.

And so today, among the wonderful saints we have living around the world, so many of the Lord's servants are causing the reproach of the Church because they stumble running in their own strength.

I forget what our brother Godwin said last night, but who can resist the force of temptation upon us without the cross of Christ? Who has found the cross not difficult? We have an instinct for self-survival that hates the Cross' work. But the Cross is very difficult.

In those times when the Lord has us in the desert and we are repenting. The desert where John was preaching was where people came to repent. In the times when we are dying to our self-life and strength, we also learn the other - the rest of the story.

There was a guy who used to speak on the radio. Paul Harvey used to speak on American culture and always shared some wisdom about America. He would share a story, and they would break for an advertisement. And then he would say, "now, for the rest of the story."

When you bear the cross, the rest of the story is that you will know the resurrection life and power of Christ. Whatever time of testing you may be going through, it is not a waste of time. The Lord has to separate us from our own self-life and our own stubborn ways. He does it because He is uniting us to Himself. There is no one who is closer to God than someone who is bearing the cross.

Some of the great Psalms that David wrote was written in the desert in the cross. How did God bring him through?

Now it says that Moses at 80 years was tending sheep on the back side of the desert. At 80 years, how many people think that it is a time for resurrection? What happened? We look at Acts 7:30.

"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush. When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. But the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'"
Acts 7:30-33 NASB1995

That is what you get for being curious. There was that bush, and it was flaming. Moses looked at his sheep, and the bush was still flaming and he thought, "I got to check it out." So Moses drew near and he heard, "Moses, Moses!"

Brothers and sisters, Moses was 80 years old and he had never heard the voice of God. He was afraid to look at the bush. And then the Lord said to him to take his shoes off for he stood on holy ground. He was 80 and never stood on holy ground. This was his first time, sanctified, standing on holy ground.

The servant of the Lord needs to stand on holy ground. "I have been crucified with Christ!" Then Jehovah showed His I.D. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses' mother spoke of

this God, "You have this God who is the God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.", and at 80 years, this is the first time Moses heard from his God.

"This is my God! I was born from this God!" It must have been so exciting. God revealed the work He was about to do - God's eternal work.

"The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings."
Exodus 3:7 NASB1995

Moses had no idea what God had been up to the 40 years he had been out of Egypt. But God had been looking at the affliction of His children. He is a living God who had heard their cries. He knew what they were going through. And He had come to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them into a good land flowing with milk and honey.

"So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."
Exodus 3:8 NASB1995

When you are 40 years old, you may have relatives you don't care too much about because you are working. At 80 years old, Moses is starting to be concerned about his family. To hear that this was God's plan for the children of Israel to finally come to this Promised Land, I am sure Moses was just about to worship when God lowered the boom. All this good news flashed before Moses before God made this statement. It is one of these callings of God that brings one to the end of themselves.

God said, "I have decided to go down and bring the children out and bring them into the land." I imagine the voice of God changed slightly as He said, "now come. I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people out of the land of Egypt."

And Moses said, "Wait wait wait! I thought you said you were going to bring the people out. What is this about me?"

You know he had been chosen because there is no way out. I can often tell one of God's chosen servants because they often have a lot of dialogue with God.

Moses went, "Who am I?" What did God say? "I will be with you."

"Who shall I say sent me?"

"I am that I am sent you."

"What if the Hebrews don't believe me when I say I am that I am sent me?"

"What do you have in your hand, Moses?"

"A staff."

"Throw it down."

It becomes a snake. Moses is shocked.

"Pick it up."

Moses picks it back up and says in Exodus 4:10,

"Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.""

Exodus 4:10 NASB1995

"The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

Exodus 4:11 NASB1995

"Please," Moses says, "send someone else! This work is too big! 2 million people! Send someone else!"

At this moment it says, "Here comes Aaron."

It is amazing to me how Aaron woke up 3 days ago down in Egypt and God tells him to go into the desert. "I'll tell you later where you're going!"

Aaron comes into the desert and God points to Aaron and says to Moses, "ok I'll let him speak."

Who won the debate? This is what it means to be chosen. All of us are called to be servants, but who will obey? When we talk about heavenly vision, this is exactly what is going on here.

There are 3 elements in the heavenly vision. If they are not together, it isn't a heavenly vision. It may be a vision. But a life-changing vision has 3 elements.

1. You see, or hear, God.
2. You see His big plan.
3. And you see that He has stuck you into that plan.

A heavenly vision isn't just seeing God. He says, "Look at what I am going to do! It is done!" And you see some finished work that He is doing. Then He says, "Now you. I want you involved."

This is what it means to be chosen. There is no way out. This is the way God does things. You cannot argue with Him, but go ahead. It is a good exercise. You learn a lot from God if you argue with Him.

And Moses, on sanctified, holy, resurrected ground, began to run the race. Bearing the reproach of the cross. Now empowered, on resurrection ground, and with the spiritual authority and the Word of God, to do what God asked.

When Moses was in dialogue with God, he didn't understand the vision of the burning bush. But after a while he understood: that old bush, that ugly bush, that useless bush, it's me! I have been sent out to the desert. I am crucified with Christ. There is nothing left there. Who wants an 80 year old bush?

Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me! Wait, this old bush, it isn't burning out! There is a fire coming out. There is new life there. But the bush isn't burning up! It is God's life!

And finally, if that weren't enough, God says, "I will speak through the bush."

You know what I love about servants of God who have served Him for a long time? Unfortunately some become proud and think they have become something. The best servants of God I know can laugh at themselves. They are just an old bush. It has been my privilege for many years to travel with our brother Stephen Kaung and see him laugh at himself.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet."
Exodus 7:1 NASB1995

Moses knew he was a bush! But Pharaoh will be afraid of him as if he was God. It is amazing what God can do through this resurrection life.

Jesus was such a powerful servant of God as He bore the reproach of the cross. Here's the secret of His running of the race: "I do nothing out of myself. If the Father speaks, I speak. If the Father judges, I judge. If the Father works, I work."

Jesus knew that as a human being, we are just bushes, but the indwelling of God with resurrection life made Him a servant of the Father.

There is so much more to say, but I see that I have run out of time.

Do you bear the reproach of Christ's cross? Is the cross canceling you out that His life can be seen in you?

You know Paul made this statement that we know to be true. Paul got down to one last boast: "God forbid that I should boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has crucified the world to me." What does that mean? The world comes with this little fish hook, hoping Paul would bite. But Paul would not bite anymore.

"You cannot trick me with your temptation because I know that there is a hook in there." It took a lot of dealing with Paul's life in those 11 years. Meanwhile, he had been crucified to the world. 15 years ago, people would say, "Saul of Tarsus, the great Pharisee!", and now people say "Paul, who?"

Paul was now erased from the world. He is no longer in the record books of the Olympics.

One last thing I want to say: I know many of you are going through the work of the cross in your life. The world is trying to draw you back into its ways. Perhaps you are having difficulties because of your faith, in your jobs, your school, or in friendships. I have lived here all my life, and I have not seen it so difficult for a real Christian to advance in his job without compromising his life. Whatever desert you are going through, there is resurrection life on the other side.

You won't have to go through 40 years. God uses extreme examples when He brings up Moses. But the Lord will deal with your self-life, your flesh, your strong opinions. You will find out on the other side why it was necessary. Because when God makes you His servant running the race, then God begins taking back those things which the world had stolen away.

There is a great purpose in the Lord's dealing in your life. Who is the devil? He steals. Who is God's servant? He will snatch him back. We are here to snatch people back. We are here to snatch back things that were lost in the years the locusts have eaten. We are here to snatch back the glory of the testimony of Jesus in His church. We are here to snatch back the victory of Christ in the lives of Christians.

When someone bears the reproach of the cross, they are restrained under a vision. They are empowered to do a work among friends, and associates and family. This is a time in America of desolation. You want to hear somebody laugh? Just say you go to church 4 times a week.

I live in an apartment in New York. We had some friends upstairs and I was talking one day to this lady who found out I was a Christian. She said, "you mean you talk to God, and He talks to you?" I said, "yes that's true." And she laughed at my face. She said, "I can't talk to you. That's such a foolish thing. What sort of idiot are you?"

Of course she and her boyfriend broke up and went their separate ways. But she's proud that she doesn't hear the voice of God. May the Lord snatch her back.

Are you a stealer from the stealer?

Praise God that His resurrection power overcomes. This is the victory that overcomes the world. That dwelling in you snatches for the kingdom of God.

When Job saw the Lord, he understood what happened. That God allowed things to be taken from him, that he may receive back from the Lord double the riches he had before. But no longer held it as his, but as stewardship unto the Lord.

I hope the Lord makes you rich if you have been through the cross. Because all that you have is no longer your own. You are making friends of worldly mammon for the sake of the kingdom of God. But if you haven't borne the cross and you aren't running the race, as you are God's child, you are going to have great misery with your riches. Better you just go through one good bankruptcy and just start over, and let God give back to you as a steward. That which the enemy has enslaved you by in the past.

Lord, we are so thankful. Your desire is to set us free that we may be your servant-sons. When the cross bears its weight upon our lives, it is so difficult. We are so full of self. But when we bear the cross, we become full of Christ. What a destiny for us! Christ is all and in all. Thank you, Lord, for this destiny you have given us by way of the cross. Bless all those who hear and understand this Word. In Jesus' name, Amen