

I want to talk to you about being crucified by Christians. I don't think I learned only a few days ago. There's a difference between the cross and being crucified. There's the cross in the Christian life. What is a crucifixion, then? Well, the cross is probably something you have an option for. I bear the cross of a broken leg; I'm not sure that's a cross—nothing you can do about it. Cross is an option, probably. That may not stand up to sound theology, but a cross is something we are willing to take up: “your cross and follow me.” And it's part of the Christian life, yet we hear very little about it. I'd like you to always remember, if you would, that the first message you ever heard me bring in Denver, Colorado, was on the cross and more. For I've come here tonight to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The cross doesn't get preached on, spoken of, talked about, or prayed for, or even mentioned very much at all. Probably never has. In fact, I don't like hearing us say in our day that things are really bad. I've been reading church history my whole life, and I'm still looking for that good period when things were better than they are now. After 300 AD, I can't find it. It's a long, dark story. We have lost, of course, the cross, but even more, who among us has ever heard about what to do with the crucifixion? Saints, there are people in this room who have been crucified by other Christians. Maybe you have not, but I will tell you there's a good chance. There's a chance you live long enough. You may be.

Now what's a crucifixion? A crucifixion is gory. It's dramatic. It's done amid a great deal of hate, pain, tragedy, and everything else imaginable. And it is unforgettable. That is, for most Christians, it is unforgettable. Almost without exception, when you are crucified by a Christian or by Christians, it destroys your Christian life. I want to give you a definition of what it means to have your Christian life destroyed. It doesn't mean you stop being a believer. It means someone threw a rock at the clock, and nothing has moved since the day you were crucified. There's been no progress, and you have chewed on that thing and eaten it again and again. You don't trust anyone, and you sure don't trust me, because I'm a Christian worker. A large number of the nails that are nailed and the mallets come from the hands of Christian workers. Not always.

I want to talk to you if you have been crucified by Christians. I want to talk to you about that. I want to present to you the possibility of getting it behind you utterly, totally, absolutely, finally, and forever - and that's rare. Alright, here's the first thing you're going to have to deal with. First, you have to accept that you need to figure out who did it. Who did it? Who was so callous as to allow you to be so grimly, pitilessly, viciously, painfully crucified?

There's only one person who did. I want you to know that He planned it. He chose it. He wrote the script. He was the casting director. He's the one who chose the people who would be present. He and He alone picked the landscape. He and He alone picked the place. He was the one who determined how bad it was going to get. He was the one who determined the amount of pain. He choreographed the entire event. He even picked the ones who'd be standing in the background, who just mutely watched. He chose the one who would drive the spear. Well, one person, and you've got to come to grips with that, and you've got to know it. You've got to understand it, and

you've got to deal with it. And you know who it was. Why, certainly, I know who it was. It was the devil. If it were the devil, it was not a crucifixion. Crucifixions are authored by only one person, and that's God, your Father, and now you've got to deal with that.

Now you have to deal with that. Oh, you don't have to, but that clock's never going to run again. I don't know how many Christians have the privilege of being crucified, but I can tell you that it was your Lord and your God who decided that it was going to happen to you. And by the way, it was an honor. But wait a minute, Gene, you have no idea how ugly it was. You don't know what was said. You don't know what was done. You don't know how utterly it destroyed so many people, and me. You don't know how much I have given and how much I lost. I don't care, brother, what happened. One, I can tell you about other people and introduce them to you. It's been worse than what happened to you. Two, it still came from the hand of your God.

Christians crucified John Hus. They brought him up on charges, brought him to trial, and refused to read his writings or his defense. When the trial came, they did not allow him to speak and presented no evidence. They would not read his books because they said they might corrupt their minds. Now, that's unjust, but it didn't keep them from taking him outside the city of Constance, Germany, and tying him to a pole, and burning him, and then ordering men to come with shovels and rake up the dirt until they had dug a hole in the ground, so that not one ash of his could be found. And they threw the dirt in the water. Did the same thing to Joan of Arc.

Two years ago, I sat down with a dear brother from Nepal, and there's this much of his arm that is nothing, his wrist is nothing but scars, and his legs, the same way. That was inflicted on him by the Nepalese government. The men who saw it were very impressed, but I would like to tell you something that happened in the privacy of my living room, which did not happen that day when those other people were present. That was a day when only that brother and I sat alone in a living room. He had spent about half of his Christian life at that time in prison. I consider him the greatest Christian of the 20th century. Probably the only man in the world that would make Paul of Tarsus nervous when it came to suffering for suffering, pain for pain, lash for lash, and church for church.

I asked him: all those years that you've been beaten, whipped, put in a cholera-infested room without any air, hoping you'd get cholera and die. Put you in a mad house, the government hoping that a madman would kill you. Starved, left in the snow, chained to a post, left to freeze to death. Which hurts you most, what the government of Nepal has done to you or what Christians have done to you? Threw up his hands like this. Brother Gene, no comparison, brother. No comparison. What Christians have done to me is far, far worse.

Every time he came out of prison, he found all of his churches bought off by Western money, Western Christians, Western missionaries. People used to go over there. He'd go back to prison, come out again. They not only bought off his workers and his churches with the American dollar, but they also turned the people of Nepal, Christians in Nepal, all of them had been won by him, turned them all against him. He started over and over and over and over. You don't have as much right to say you were unjustly treated as he does. And he's still on his feet. He's still a tiger. On one

of the darkest days of my life, I said to him, I've made a decision. I mean, I was down, way down. I told him, "Prem, I have decided to leave the ministry, but I will wait until the day after you leave." He said, "Oh, Brother Gene, you never leave the ministry." I'm going to resign the day after; the day after that brother quits, I quit. That's when I'm going to quit. Not until then. But Gene, it was so unjust and so ugly and so gory and so unfair and so brutal. Excuse me. That's what a crucifixion is. If you don't have that, you don't have a crucifixion. The setting is lies, rumors, innuendos, war lies, hate, anger, and a determination to destroy, no matter how brutal it gets. I tell you two little stories that nonetheless struck me when I heard them.

A lawyer who was trying to bring together a pastor and the deacons. The deacons hated the pastor so much that, when he left, they refused to pay him for last week's salary. The lawyers asked why, and they said because we want him to hurt. We Christians are beautiful ones. This happened just a few months ago. A brother told me he was in Eastern Europe with one of the parachurch organizations, and he said something he shouldn't have. Now, this is Eastern Europe, folks, and they were in a couple of buses or wagons or something, and the leader of the group made him get out of the van and left him on the side of the road; left him there, and they drove back to the Netherlands, Holland, and left him on the side of the road.

That brings me up to the next one. Whatever they did to you, they did it in the name of God. And if that's not done, it's not a crucifixion. Of course, it was done in the name of God. I read a passage out of a history book about the Albigensian crusades, when the Catholic armies, and I'm not picking on the Catholics, swept into a town of the Albigensians, and one of the one of the generals or officers wrote home and said, "And it was with great rejoicing to God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ that we slayed every man and woman."

That's what a crucifixion is. Gene, surely God did not author it. You tell me the most brutal, ugly, vicious, heinous, horrendous, diabolical, hateful, vicious thing that man ever did to another man in all the annals of human history, and I will top it. I'm talking about the story of the death of my Lord...and God offered that crucifixion. It's supposed to be bloody. It's supposed to be unbearable. You know what it's supposed to do? Do you know its purpose? Do you know the purpose of the crucifixion? It's to kill you. It's to kill...you. That's its purpose. Now, dear child of God, there is something to be learned about a crucifixion. I'd just like for you to all join me for a moment, at either your own or one you have seen of another child of God, and some of you in this room have been crucified.

Let me make myself crystal clear to you. I am not speaking to you tonight to justify you or to make you feel good about the way those dirty rascals treated you. To make you walk out of here feeling good about the fact that you have suffered and thereby justify yourself. You need to go back and remember how fleshly you got. And that comes to the purpose of a crucifixion. The purpose of a crucifixion is to lay naked before the world...your reaction to being crucified. How did you take it? I'm going to come back to this point: if you got angry, if you fought back, if you argued, if you went nose to nose and toe to toe, if you shouted and screamed, if you talked ugly, if you made

phone calls, it was not a crucifixion. It was just two people in the flesh, and it was wasted on both. It was a total waste.

Now, let me quickly say that it doesn't have to be, even today. We'll come back, but up until right now, if you were as ugly as the other guy or almost, that wasn't a crucifixion, friend. That was just the ugly flesh of man, showing how vicious and unprincipled you are. A crucifixion will show you and God and angels who you are and what you are. I tell you saints, there's nothing more wonderful than to have an instinct, to know how to be crucified. An instinct. This is a crucifixion, and this is how I should walk.

A crucifixion has to have ugly phone calls, letters, people screaming at one another, accusing one another, truth twisted, false accusations. It has to have just one element. It has to have "ugly". It has to have "ugly". There was a crucifixion like that, with lies and innuendo, and the person being crucified...his reputation has never recovered, even till this day. Perhaps one of the hardest things about a crucifixion is that you lose your friends. Sometimes you lose your family. But oh, those of you who have lost everything, and your work was destroyed, and your position was taken from you, and the rumors that began on you that day or that week will follow you to your grave. There's no escape. It has permanently damaged your reputation.

But this Man had an instinct for handling all of that. He was the only one who wasn't talking. He was the only one who didn't say anything ugly to anyone. He was the only one going along with the crucifixion, allowing it to take its course at its highest possible mark. He stood there with dignity. Let me tell you something. I know that your reputation was ruined. I know that you sometimes feel you'll never get over it because the rumors will follow you the rest of your life. Whenever it comes back up, and you meet people, and the rumor comes back up, and it's in your presence, someone says to you, "Did this really happen?" When other people are talking about you, and they're making you the villain, then you want to regurgitate the whole thing, and talk about it, and go through it, and try to justify yourself, and defend yourself. Jesus Christ did not justify, and He did not defend. He allowed the full brunt of that whole thing to hit Him.

I will tell you a story. Just possibly among the greatest Christians who ever lived were the Moravians. They started in the early 1700s. They were the first Protestants ever to take the gospel anywhere, and they took it everywhere. They went to the worst parts of this world. They went to Greenland. They went to Africa. I'm sure you've heard the story of the two brothers who sold themselves into slavery because the only people allowed into a certain part of the world were slaves. They took the gospel to the Muslims. They marched into the interior of a place called America and marched and marched and marched and built a village. Nothing was near it. They preached the gospel to the American Indians, who turned around and killed them. By the way, the name of the little place they built was called Bethlehem. Today it's Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Somebody wrote a book about them, and the book said that they were actually Roman Catholics and to stay away from them because they were papists trying to get people hooked into them and then bringing them back into the Catholic church. That followed them for 100 years. You don't

know how it ended their ministry worldwide. It followed them all over the world, doors shut. All over the world, people feared them. All over the world, people would not listen to them...all over the world. They were not allowed into countries or cities because they were Catholics under the guise of being evangelical Christian missionaries, and their work on this earth could have been this, but ended up being that. They probably did no more than 10% of what they could have done if that book had not been written. When that book ceased being printed and went out of print, and nobody even knew where it came from, the rumor lived on for a hundred years.

You know what that book made them? It was the very quality and the source of the quality of their beings, and they became "the Moravians." I know ministers whose ministries have been cut by 90% because they were crucified, and the rumor has never died, and that's no excuse. The memories of what they did to you are no excuse. It's not an excuse, brother.

Please come with me. I want you to look at three men who got crucified. The first one may look a lot more like you than you'd like to admit. He is screaming, and he is cursing, and he is blaspheming, and he is railing against men and God. He's just got one thought in this world, and that's to get me down. If we had gone that day and rescued him, he would have gone away spitting demons, and nothing would have changed in his life. He'd been the same man. He didn't take to being crucified.

I want to tell you about the next person who was crucified that day, who, to me, is really a remarkable brother. He had an instinct for being crucified. He had been a thief his whole life. He didn't want to be crucified, and he thought this man who was being crucified with him was a joke. He was crucified with a nut, a religious nut. He was railing, screaming, and cursing, and he didn't have any Bible help behind him. He didn't have any theological education. He had never heard a message on the cross, and he had never heard a message on how to be crucified. By the way, I want you to know that the third person was essentially being crucified by Christians. Do you understand what I mean? That it was the religious people of the day.

That second man on that cross suddenly figured out how to be crucified. He uttered a word that day that nobody else in the world uttered that day. You know what that word was? You know what that word was? He's the only human who uttered that word that night—the only one. You know what that word was? Bigger word than that. Big word. He said, "Lord..." the only human being this side of the gates of heaven, who said, "Lord." That man learned how to be crucified right in the middle of it, and *he* was crucified. The first fellow wasn't crucified. Listen, he was just killed. And as his friend said to him, "We got what we deserve," when that man died, he died. He just got killed dead because of who he was. That second man on that cross got crucified. Do you know where he stands in Christian history? He's the first person to ever walk through *the Door*. A blood-bought redeemed believer. He figured out how to get crucified, just right then, at the very last minute.

Now we have come to the serious part. This is where it really gets heavy. There was a third man that day who was nailed to a tree. Do you remember His attitude about being unjustly crucified?

It was unjust, and it was unfair, and it was illegal, and there are no words in the English language that can describe how extreme it was. And did you notice when He rose from the grave, He came out of the grave, and He spat on the ground, and he cursed Caiaphas and Ananias. He swore at the liars. He got His disciples together and said, “Did you hear what they said? I'm telling you, that's not true. That part's not true. That's not true. They twisted my words. I never said that. They left out one word. Rumors about me.”

That man who picked up that sword and jabbed my side, and the one who had the audacity to give me nothing to drink. The gall. How cruel can a human be? You can't imagine how it hurt. Now I've got to live with this - dying like a common criminal. I'll never forget it, and I'll never forgive. You remember the Lord saying all that? Forget about his dying breath. Let's go to the tomb. Let's watch him come out. Listen, take this as your mark. He never made a reference...He never made a reference to that crucifixion. The worst there ever was. Let that be your standard.

Well, saints, you flunked. Do you know why you flunked? It's because you haven't had your Gethsemane yet. Thank God we get the privilege of putting our Gethsemane after our crucifixion. That's the grace of God. You see, when the Lord Jesus faced His cross, He faced it in a garden called Gethsemane, and He did something incredible there. I'd like for you to get really clear on this. Your Lord...

(Continued in Part 2)