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MODERN TREND OF AVOIDING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Hebrews 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Hebrews 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

We are facing a great danger in the church today, a subtle error. More and more it grows. This error is that many people would rather seek after popularity and acceptance in this world than to stand up for the truth. The reason this is happening is because people are seeking to avoid what Hebrews calls, "the reproach of Christ.."

In fact, it was the fear of the reproach of Christ that kept me from coming to Christ when I first heard the gospel. I was tempted to seek the applause of men rather than the reproach of Christ.

When I was young I was trying to decide on a career, or what I would do with my life. When I played music people seemed to like it and people would encourage me and compliment me.

Then I met a friend who asked me if I would play weddings and parties on weekends, and even get paid to do so. When I was a kid, the average pay was \$2.00 an hour. If you worked 8 hours that was \$16.00 a day. My buddy said if I played with his little group I would make \$50.00 a gig, and that was to do something I liked - and people would applaud you for it. So at the age of 13 this is what I started to do. By time I was 16 years old I was doing this all the time. Back then everyone liked me.

I was first introduced to the gospel through Brother Accardi, and then others shared this message with me. Suddenly I was confronted with the truth of Scripture and I soon realized that, for some reason, the message of the Bible was not very popular with the crowd that I was associated with. It still isn't.

I saw it in Peter, a fellow that everyone liked, the life of the party. Now no one wanted to be around him. Why? Let me suggest to you it is because of "THE REPROACH OF CHRIST".

I struggled with the idea of giving my heart to the Lord for over a year after I heard the message. The main reason I did not just come to Christ was because I feared being associated with "The Reproach Of Christ.."

In 1974 I gave my heart to the Lord, and I, too, became a believer.

Much to my surprise, I found a whole group of people that claimed to be Christians. Larger than I could ever imagine, and the rejection and persecution that I was prepared to receive at first did not come, except from my old friends and acquaintances.

Now, over 44 years have passed and I am now a Pastor for over 35 years. A lot of years have passed and I see a subtle danger that is overwhelming the churches and Christianity. What I see is that many churches today are, through subtlety, avoiding the reproach of Christ.

Here is what it is.

People are more and more afraid to be associated with the truth of Scripture and are trying to make Christianity more and more palatable to the masses and the world.

This morning I want to talk to you about what the Bible describes as the REPROACH OF CHRIST. I do not believe that it has changed. What has changed is the church, and so many who are associated with the church that seek to avoid this reproach.

THE REPROACH OF CHRIST.

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I WHAT IS THE REPROACH OF CHRIST?

1. The Reproach of Christ Involves Living As He Did.

I John 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

If you live as He did.

If you preach as He preached.

If you say what He said.

People will react to you as they reacted to Him.

NOTHING HAS CHANGED! THERE WERE THOSE WHO LOVED CHRIST.
BUT THOSE WHO WERE OF THIS WORLD HATED HIM. Obviously, they crucified Him.

2. THE REPROACH OF CHRIST INVOLVES REJECTION BY THE WORLD.

More and more, we are seeing in the church a fear of being rejected by the world.

A fear of suffering for the truth.

A fear of lost of friends, and the rejection of the world.

The reproach of Christ is when you are willing to take a stand for the truth, which causes people to dislike you and even hate you.

Luke 6:26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

I John 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

WHAT IS THE REPROACH OF CHRIST?

It is none other than to be hated by the world:

It is to associate with the people of God.

It is to reject the pleasures of sin, which will only last for a season.

Hebrews 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

NOTICE WHAT JESUS SAID:

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Why do people in the world Blaspheme His name? It is because they hate Him.

Why does the world world hate Him? Because they love darkness and He is light!

Because Christ is not of this world. He speaks against this world, etc..

My personal testimony is the same as Moses.

In 1974, just like Moses, I chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Rather than seek the applause of men, I chose to follow Christ.

Why will we fear the reproach of the world to follow Christ?

II. A WATERED DOWN MESSAGE IS BEING USED TO AVOID THE REPROACH OF CHRIST.

It is the offence of Christ's Word that brings the reproach.

If Jesus just healed people, and fed people, did all these miracles, and just watered down His message, He would have been received by all.

There would have been no reproach.

Example: We see at one of our Lord's first sermons, immediately they reproached Him for preaching the truth.

Luke 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Luke 4:29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

Luke 4:30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

1. Today it is not that what is being said is wrong, it is what is being left out, that is the problem..

So undiscerning people will go to some of these churches and say the sermons are good. Everything seems good, but there is a subtle attempt by many of them to avoid the reproach of Christ.

2. Today: Many are lowering the level of commitment that the Lord is requiring for people to be saved.

John 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

John 6:27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Jesus rebuked the people because they were looking to Him for the wrong things. When He corrected them and told them what He was all about they rejected Him.

If you read the rest of John Chapter 6 to the end, you will see Jesus using the example of faith in Him and His word as eating bread. They were looking to him for some physical benefit, and Christ rebuked them and said He was the bread of life. They needed to hunger for Him and His word more than physical bread. Then He said:

John 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

These people totally misunderstood the Lord and it says,

John 6:60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

John 6:61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

John 6:66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Some people do good deeds and everyone likes them for it. If Jesus just fed people everyone would have loved Him.

It is only when people take a stand for the truth that they become partakers in what the Bible calls the reproach of Christ.

If all that Jesus did was heal people, feed people, and perform miracles, He would not have been rejected and crucified.

The reproach of Christ came because of the Word and teaching of our Lord.

He rebuked people for the error.

Cast out the money changers.

Corrected the Pharisees.

Taught there was a hell and why people went there.

Brought people under conviction of sin and need of repentance.
Did not tell people they were good, nor make them feel good about themselves.
Preached the truth and offended people because of it.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON ONCE SAID,

"That very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors."

(Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "How Saints May Help The Devil," July 24, 1859)

3. THERE IS THE TREND TO AVOID THE REPROACH OF CHRIST IN THE MODERN CHURCH:
 - A. Speak less about hell and God's judgment.
 - B. Don't make people uncomfortable by preaching on sin.
 - C. Entertain people rather than preach to them.
 - D. Utilize more music and entertainment than preaching and teaching.

Listen to the words of Charles Spurgeon regarding this method of reaching unbelievers:

"Dear friends, we know that souls are not won by music, if they were it would be time for preachers to give way to opera singers."

Do you realize the very thing that I lived for is the very thing that I set aside as my priority. I play music for the Lord. But it is not more important to me than the Word of God and preaching the Bible.

III. THE REPROACH OF CHRIST INVOLVES A WILLINGNESS TO ASSOCIATE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

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Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

There is a trend today to claim to believe in Jesus, but not to want to associate with His church.

John MacArthur: Concerning the seeker sensitive movement, Purpose driven Church:

Was John the Baptist seeker sensitive and concerned with the hang-ups with the unchurched? No, his head was chopped off for preaching the Word of God (Matthew 14:1-11). Was Stephen seeker sensitive and concerned with the hang-ups with the unchurched? No, they stoned him for preaching the Word of God (Acts 7:1-60). What is the history of the true prophets of God when speaking to the

nation of Israel? Most of them were murdered, abused, and despised by the unchurched Israelites (Acts 7:52; Matthew 23:31; Jeremiah 2:30; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Hebrews 11:36-40; and Nehemiah 9:26).

Charles Spurgeon Wrote:

"The fact is, that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayers, dancing, and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torment, we can at least warn men of the existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that the people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly."

"Everywhere there is apathy. Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter the better."

WHAT DO THE MODERN PREACHERS TEACH THEIR DISCIPLES?

"Keep your pastoral prayers short in your seeker services. The unchurched can't handle long prayers; their minds wander or they fall asleep."

"Once established, some ambitious churches are making a big business out of spreading their expertise. Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington formed a consulting arm called Willow Creek Assn. It earned \$17 million one year, partly by selling marketing and management advice to 10,500 member churches from 90 denominations. Jim Mellado, the hard-charging Harvard MBA who runs it, last year brought an astonishing 110,000 church and lay leaders to conferences on topics such as effective leadership. "Our entrepreneurial impulse comes from the Biblical mandate to get the message out," says Willow Creek founder Bill Hybels, who hired Stanford MBA Greg Hawkins, a former McKinsey & Co. consultant, to handle the church's day-to-day management. Willow Creek's methods have even been lauded in a Harvard Business School case study.

Hybel's consumer-driven approach is evident at Willow Creek, where he shunned stained glass, Bibles, or even a cross for the 7,200-seat, \$72 million sanctuary he recently built. The reason? Market research suggested that such traditional symbols would scare away non-churchgoers. He also gives practical advice. On a recent Wednesday evening, one of his four "teaching" pastors gave a service that started with 20 minutes of music, followed by a lengthy sermon about the Christian approach to personal finances. He told the 5,000 listeners about resisting advertising aimed at getting people to buy things they don't need and suggested they follow up at home by e-mailing questions. Like Osteen, Hybel packages self-help programs with a positive message intended to make people feel good about themselves.

MOSES CHOSE TO SUFFER AFFLICTION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD RATHER THAN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF SIN FOR A SEASON.

Today, the modern trend is to avoid the reproach of Christ and to gain the love of the world. In essence, the new ministry philosophy is bend the church to the the world and let the people of the world feel more comfortable in the church.

But the Bible warns:

I John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

I John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

IV. CONCLUSION:

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Hebrews 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

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Are we willing to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than what this world has to offer?

From Genesis to Revelation, that is what this book is all about.

Will we follow the pattern of the world or will we follow Christ?

Trick of the devil:

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

Matthew 4:9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Matthew 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Today, by and large, the modern church movement is utilizing the methods of the world to get great gain and it seems to be working.

Here is the error of the day:

I. Deify man rather than God.

However, this is the opposite approach of the Bible. Notice Paul the Apostle's methods that contradict this worldly methodology. Notice in Acts 14:11-20, Paul's manner of ministering and suffering for the cause of Christ!

Acts 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

Acts 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Acts 14:13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

Acts 14:15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

Acts 14:18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Acts 14:19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Acts 14:20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

We see Paul going from being deified to vilified in the same city. Notice men would rather magnify men than magnify the true God! I submit to you nothing has changed. People still would rather deify men than God.

2. The Modern trend in the contemporary church is to Focus in on Man's needs and wants rather than what pleases God and brings glory to Him. Again man is the center and not God.

Here is a quote from the mega church gurus:

"The ground we have in common with unbelievers is not the Bible, but our common needs, hurts, and interests as human beings. You cannot start with a text expecting the unchurched to be fascinated by it. You must first capture their attention, and then move them to the truth of God's Word. By starting with a topic that interests the unchurched and then showing what the Bible says about it, you can grab their attention, disarm prejudices, and create an interest in the Bible that wasn't there before."

God says to pray without ceasing.

Rick Warren says keep your prayers short. Why? Lest you make the unchurched people uncomfortable in your church?

God says to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

The Contemporary church movement says don't quote too much Scripture, paraphrase it, change it to suit the mindset of the people.

The Bible says Be holy for I am holy.

The Contemporary Mindset is don't alienate people with biblical standards.

So it is that we do away with the reproach of Christ.

Application:

Are you looking for a bed of Roses in this life? You are looking for the wrong thing.

The Apostle Paul said it.

I Corinthians 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

I Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

I Corinthians 15:32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

MOSES WAS WILLING TO SUFFER WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD BECAUSE IT WAS RIGHT.

MOSES ESTEEMED THE REPROACH OF CHRIST GREATER RICHES, THAN THE RICHES OF EGYPT.

Hebrews 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

What is wrong today? I'll tell you what is wrong. Too many Christians are afraid to bear His reproach.

Too many are afraid of suffering outside the camp.

Let us follow the example of Moses.

Hebrews 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

There is nothing that this world can give you that will compare to the spiritual riches of Jesus Christ.