

**In grace or in judgment, Christ's glory conquers all***Ezekiel 12:21-28*

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, <sup>22</sup> Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? <sup>23</sup> Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. <sup>24</sup> For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. <sup>25</sup> For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. <sup>26</sup> ¶ Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>27</sup> Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he propheseth of the times that are far off. <sup>28</sup> Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

Dear Christian Friends,

As a Christian, you have to get used to people mocking you, ridiculing you, and making you the brunt of their jokes. Compared to how bad persecution can be, this is a light burden, but no less real. There are many silly beliefs out there, and men love to make fun of others, no matter how sincere they may be. It is not surprising that Christians would be at the top of their list, but there truly is a difference with Jesus' disciples, among all those whom men ridicule. We look at their mockery with different eyes, the eyes of God's Spirit, and cannot help but remember the words of Scripture, "They deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pe. 2:1).

Our faith is not merely in God, for most men do not find such a thing objectionable. Our faith is in His Son, Jesus Christ. But it is not just in His Son, for even that men might be ready to accept. What they cannot stomach is the Cross of Jesus, for that is the very center of our faith. We cannot think of Jesus apart from His Cross, for without His Cross, we would have no Jesus worth believing in. Oh, His worth and purity and goodness would be intact without His cross, but we would never know of it, never taste of His goodness, never receive God's mercy, were it not for His Cross. Our faith is meaningless without it. Therefore we heartily sing, "In the Cross of Christ, I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time." As the Cross is the center of our faith, it is our redemption from sin and death that is ever on our minds. Since the Cross is the place where all the sins of the world are found laid upon the shoulders of Jesus, the ridicule and mockery of men stings all the more. We are much like these men, for we deserve the same death and hell that they deserve. Yet God has revealed the glory of His Son to us through His Cross, the cross where

the sins of every mocker and scorner are laid. When they blaspheme the name of God, and deny His Word, we hear them deny their own redemption, and are reminded that it is for these very mockers and scorners that we are still here in this world. We are called to declare the glory of God to men, in the face of Jesus Christ, and this is the response that we most often receive. It can be devastating, frustrating, even depressing to see men reject the Lord of life.

Therefore it is good to hear the words of our Lord which He spake to Ezekiel. This man of God was enduring the same scorn and ridicule. His own people, both in Babylon and in Israel, were telling Him, "The days drag on and on, year after year, and we see no proof of these prophecies you preach! They have failed." Imagine how it must be for God to send out a prophet, to put all these words in His mouth. Ezekiel knew that the Lord's Word must be true, no matter what, but the ridicule and scorn stung. This is the reward that the prophet received for speaking the truth which God had put in his mouth. Nobody believed him. You see, it is never any different. God's prophets and people in every age meet the same kind of answer. But the Lord responds: "I will make this proverb of theirs to cease", these words which they speak in mockery of Me. Tell them the days are indeed at hand. God is speaking to them right now. He declares: "I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall not be prolonged; I speak the word now in your days, and I will perform it."

God does not need men to believe His Word for it to be fulfilled. He will do what He said, no matter what men think, or how they mock. This is a great comfort to us. But it is also a great comfort that the Lord has not sent us into the world to use our powers of persuasion to convince men of the truth. At no time did God ever tell any of His prophets, "Go change their hearts." No, he only said, "God tell them what I have said." That is all that He asks us to do. It is we who have convinced ourselves that when men reject the word of God, that we have failed. No, the only one who has failed are they who have rejected the Word of the Lord. But God's Word cannot fail. Which of God's prophets did Israel not reject? Even Samuel, the last of the Judges that God sent Israel, met with an unruly people who were unsatisfied with God's rule over them. They demanded a King instead, and when Samuel despaired at this, the Lord reminded Him, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).

As you shine with the light of Christ, and speak of the Cross of Christ where your sins were forgiven, it is inevitable that men will foolishly mock you. What should you say to them? Should you jump into the fray and start arguing? No, for we should not lower God's truth to the level of their lies, as if there is anything at all *to* debate. But certainly you cannot keep silent when men mock the truth of God's Word lest

they believe in your silence that you agree with them, or think them wise. How then do you respond to such fools? Proverbs puts forward this dilemma: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Prov. 26:4,5). You will never convince a fool. All you can do is state the truth plainly, so that others may know and hear, and leave the fool himself to wallow in his foolishness. Once that truth is confessed, you are done. The rest is for the Spirit of God to do. As Jesus said, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet" (Mat. 10:14).

So God instructs Ezekiel in our lesson. The mocker's of God's Word will always insist that His Word will never be fulfilled. They will smugly muster all their intellect, their knowledge of history and science, as proof against God Himself. Ezekiel meets such people both in Israel among the remnant that were left behind when the rest of the nation was taken captive in Babylon, and in Babylon, among the captives. But God's response is the same: I will bring my Word to pass, and then they shall know that this prophecy was not for some far off people, some vaporous unfulfillable future, but for *them*. God's Word is *always* meant for those who hear it. No matter whether it speaks of some event yet to come, even though it be something that you will not live to see, yet that Word is given to you to hear and consider and apply. The Israelites who heard Ezekiel did not live to see the promise of Christ fulfilled with their own eyes. They did not live to see the judgment of God come upon Jerusalem. But the Word of the Lord was given to *them* because if *they* did not receive it, then the judgment of the Lord would fall upon them even so, even in death. Would that they had heeded the word of the Lord's prophet so that they might have known the Lord's glory in His grace and mercy.

Imagine how it must have been for Peter, James, and John. They were there, on the mount, when Jesus was transfigured before their very eyes. He glowed with the divine light of God Himself, and the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." John reports in his Gospel, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Peter declared, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." And what was the meaning of the vision which they beheld? It was the most glorious truth of all, that Jesus is the promised Christ, God in human flesh, sent to redeem all men from their sins. Even Moses was there, and Elisha, to add their testimony that yes, this is He. God's

promise, which men mocked for centuries, has now been fulfilled. This same Jesus sent Peter, James, John, and all the Apostles out to declare His name to the nations. And if the transfiguration was not enough, they witnessed His crucifixion, and saw Him alive, after He had risen from the dead, ate with Him, heard Him preach. You can imagine the truth just bursting from their hearts, with a fervency that finds no equal in the history of the world. They saw this, with their own eyes, heard the Father with their own ears, and then the rest of their lives listened to the mockery of millions who denied that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God. They listened to the world call this magnificent truth a "cunningly devised fable." So also John notes: "He was in the World, and the Word was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

And now, we have the eyewitness testimony of the Apostles, and God has convinced us that these are not cunningly devised fables. They happened. The Apostles certainly were absolutely convinced, as even honest historians must marvel at their fervency, their devotion to the Gospel which they declared, when their only reward was persecution and death. History knows many movements which were born of military zeal, such as the religion of Islam and their doctrine of empire and death for all who will not yield to it. But where do men follow those who are killed all the day long, who wield no sword, offer no wealth or power, who count themselves worthless and nothing, no better than any man, who throw themselves down at the mercy of a gracious God and find all their worth in the undeserved love of a God that they cannot see? It is ironic, perhaps that in being eye-witnesses of Christ, in having in their memories the absolute proof of every Word of God, these men behaved as fools in the eyes of the world. So it is with every disciple of Jesus. They have not rejected you, they have rejected the Cross of Christ, where God's glory is not only revealed, but is offered to men as a gift of grace.

But the glory of God in Christ Jesus does not rely upon man's willingness to believe it. He shall do what He has said. He revealed Himself to all men on His Cross, and there all men may receive Him in grace and mercy. But the day shall surely come when He will reveal to all men the glory which was visible on the mount. And then the Father will not speak from heaven to testify of Christ, for Jesus Himself will speak and judge the world, and every man, now bearing witness with their own eyes to the glory of God's Son, will not doubt, but believe, too late, that the Lord always keeps His word. With Jesus will be not only Moses and Elijah, but all the saints of all time, gathered around him in their own flesh. They too shall see the glory of God, and will rejoice with great delight, for there, with their eyes they shall see in person the same Jesus Whom their faith had seen in His Word. May God grant that we hear the Words which our Lord speaks, that we might know His glory in His grace. Amen.