

The Word of the Cross

by Zac Poonen

The message of the cross is not attractive to man, but those who follow the real Christ must be willing to face rejection and take up their cross to experience the promises of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-2, Isaiah 53:7, Isaiah 53:10, Isaiah 53:12, Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, John 15:18

Topics: "Rejection of Christ", "The Cross"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the profound message of Isaiah 53, highlighting the rejection of Christ as a despised figure rather than a powerful ruler. He points out that true acceptance of the gospel requires embracing the cross, which is often met with disdain in today's world, just as it was in the first century. Poonen urges believers to reflect on their response to both the promises of God and the call to take up their cross, noting that many Christians struggle with this balance. He illustrates the importance of silence in the face of criticism, contrasting it with the need to praise God openly. Ultimately, he reminds us that just as Jesus was crushed for our sake, we too may face misunderstanding and rejection in our walk of faith.

Transcript

Chapter 53 of Isaiah is the chapter of the cross and begins with a question: "Who has believed our message?" Who in Israel would believe what Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come, not with power, but as a despised person, as a root out of a dry ground?

"He grew up before His Father" (Isa.53.2). The secret of Jesus' life was that He did not live before the face of men but before the face of His Father. He was not attractive to men when He hung on the cross. We read that "He had no appearance that we should be attracted to Him." (Isa.53.2)

The message of the gospel is not attractive to man even today. Christ was not accepted by the world in the first century; and He is not accepted by the world in the twentieth century. The Christ that some claim to appreciate today is a false Christ, and not the real One Who spoke against sin, against the love of money, and taught people to love even their enemies. The real Christ is despised, forsaken and rejected even today.

And if you follow the real Christ, I assure you that you will face the same rejection by the world that He faced. You will be despised even by much of Christendom, just as Jesus was by most of the religious people of His day. It was not the Greeks and Romans who despised Jesus and rejected Him, but the

Pharisees (the fundamentalists of His day).

Who has a heart to accept the word of the cross - even today? We can be excited when we hear the wonderful promises of blessing that are found in the Scriptures. But the word of the cross comes along with the promises in the same package. You cannot have one without the other. One reason for the shallowness in the lives of many Christians today is that they have tried to claim the promises without taking up their cross.

Notice that it says three times in verse Isa.53.7 that Jesus was silent. "He did not open His mouth. He was silent. He did not open His mouth." As believers, we must know how to open our mouths wide and shout to the Lord at times when we praise and thank Him. We must also know how to keep our mouths shut when we are insulted, criticized and slandered. Jesus knew how to praise His Father and He also knew how to be silent. Unfortunately it is the other way round with many Christians. They are silent when it comes to shouting God's praises in the meetings. But they do know how to shout and defend themselves when someone accuses them or hurts them. But that is the characteristic of an upside-down world, and Christians must be different.

In Isa.53.7, we read that the Father was pleased to crush Jesus - and "therefore He will see His seed and prolong His days." Those are the results that come out of the crushing. "He will prolong His days" means that Jesus would be resurrected from the dead. And "the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand."

This is the way for us to go too. And as "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa.53.12), we too will be misunderstood by other Christians and categorized with the wicked.

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