

Classics

The Power Of The Word Of God

What God has promised, He will surely perform.

By Ulrich Zwingli



Courtesy of The Billy Graham Center Museum

The Word of God is so sure and strong that if God wills, all things are done the moment that He speaks His Word. For it is so living and powerful that even the things which are irrational immediately conform themselves to it, or to be more accurate, things both rational and irrational are fashioned and . . . constrained in conformity with its purpose. The proof may be found in Genesis 1: “And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” [Genesis 1:3]. Note how alive and strong the Word is, not merely ruling all things but creating out of nothing that which it wills.

God told Noah to make an ark, because it would rain 40 days and 40 nights and all living creatures would be destroyed (Genesis 7:4). And assuredly it came to pass . . . Again, by His angels God declared that He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities, and it did not fail to happen as He said (Genesis 19).

Again, God told Abraham: “I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and Sarah thy wife shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10). Sarah herself did not believe, for she was some 80 years old, but it came to pass as God had said (Genesis 21:1–2). The scriptures of the Old Testament are full of illustrations of the certainty of God’s Word, for all the passages mentioned are taken from the one book Genesis, and indeed from only one part of that book.

New Testament Examples

We will now turn to the New Testament and consider the strength and certainty and power of God’s Word as we find it there. The divine declaration to Zechariah by the angel Gabriel seemed at first sight completely incredible, for his wife, Elizabeth, had always been barren and both of them were now advanced in years. And because he did not believe, Zechariah was deprived of the power of speech. But that which he regarded as impossible assuredly came to pass—such is the strength and certainty and life of the Word of God—and John the Baptist, the righteous forerunner of the Messiah, was born.

The pure Virgin Mary was taken aback when the angel announced and declared the birth of

Jesus Christ, for she knew not a man; but the Word of God was so alive and sure that without any detraction from her purity that holy thing was conceived and grew in her and was eventually born of her for the salvation of the world. Thus we see that the whole course of nature must be altered rather than that the Word of God should not remain and be fulfilled.

Does God Delay?

These passages from the New Testament will be quite enough to show that the Word of God is so alive and strong and powerful that all things have necessarily to obey it, and that as often and at the time that God Himself appoints. And let us beware lest we murmur against God like the ungodly in the days of Ezekiel 12:27, who said that the Word spoken by the prophets was [delayed]: For the forbearance of God is not negligence, but a respect for the most convenient time.

Not that this respect is at all necessary to God, but beneficial to us, for with God there can be no time, seeing He is not subject to anything, and that which is duration to us is to Him eternally present. With God, in fact, there is no such thing as past or future, but all things are naked and open to His eyes. He does not learn with time or forget with time, but with unerring knowledge and perception He sees all things present in eternity. It is in time that we who are temporal find the meaning and measure of longness or shortness. Yet what seems long to us is not long to God, but eternally present.

If you think that God often fails to punish a wicked individual or nation, suffering their arrogance far too long, you are completely mistaken. For note that they can never escape Him. The whole world is before Him; where then can they hide from His presence? Most certainly He will find them (see Psalm 139).

And if you think that He does not punish or save according to His Word you are quite wrong. His Word can never be undone or destroyed or resisted. For if it could, if God could not always fulfill it, if some other were stronger than He and could resist it, it would not be almighty. But it must always be fulfilled.

If it is not fulfilled at the time when you desire, that is not due to any deficiency of power, but to the freedom of His will. For if He had to act according to your will, you would be stronger than He and He would have to consult you. But what could be more nonsensical?

God will never leave His Word powerless, as He says in Ezekiel 12:25: "O you that are rebellious, I will say the word and will perform it." And just after: "The word which I have spoken shall be done."

The whole teaching of the gospel is a sure demonstration that what God has promised will certainly be performed. For the gospel is now an accomplished fact: The one who was promised to the patriarchs, and to the whole race, has now been given to us, and in Him we have the assurance of all our hope, as Simeon said in Luke 2. "For what can he withhold when he delivered up his own Son for us, and how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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