

Thy Word Sheds Light Upon My Path

The Psalter, 1912

Thy Word sheds light upon my path;
a shining light, it guides my feet;
Thy righteous judgments to observe,
my solemn vow I now repeat.

In my distress I plead with Thee,
send help according to Thy Word;
accept my sacrifice of praise
and make me know Thy judgments, LORD.

In danger oft and nigh to death,
Thy law remembered is my aid.
The wicked seek my overthrow,
yet from Thy truth I have not strayed.

Thy precepts are my heritage,
for daily they my heart rejoice;
to keep Thy statutes faithfully
shall ever be my willing choice.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Preposterous Statements in the Bible

Jon Pratt

The sports radio station in our area conducts its annual *Preposterous Statements Contest* by comparing ridiculous utterances of athletes, announcers, and coaches to see which of them is the most absurd. For example, one year the winning entry came from a sportscaster who claimed that a basketball team trailing by 12 points had their opponent “right where they want them.”

Have you ever shaken your head while reading the Bible when preposterous statements are blurted? These quotes from various biblical characters often leave the reader astounded, gobsmacked, incredulous. These utterances always reveal something negative about the speaker and serve as a literary device, commanding the reader to beware. Please consider five types of warnings displayed in the following preposterous statements of the Bible. I will provide the verses in italics in each category along with a short explanation.

Don't Deceive!

- Genesis 3:4 – *But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.”* Satan could not have been farther from the truth and he certainly knew this.
- Jeremiah 42:5–6 – *They said to Jeremiah, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the LORD your God sends you to us. Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”* This request for direction from Yahweh came from the remnant leaders of Israel after the majority of Israelites had been taken in exile to Babylon. Here is the message Jeremiah received and delivered to them: “O remnant of Judah ‘Do not go down to Egypt.’ Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day” (42:19). But the leaders had no intention of listening to God: “Azariah the son of Hoshai and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, ‘You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there’” (43:2). These leaders planned to obey God only if he gave them the answer they wanted to hear.



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Don't Presume!

- Exodus 19:8 – *All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."* This is the first of three occasions at Sinai (Exod 24:3, 7 are the other two) where the Israelites foolishly presume that they will be able to obey God's law completely. Also see Joshua 24:24 where the next generation makes the same error.
- Numbers 16:3 – *They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"* Despite God's clear revelation that Moses was Israel's appointed leader (Exod 33:8–11; Num 12:5–8), the rebels presumed that they deserved equal authority and they resisted any implication that they should submit to anyone.
- Matthew 26:33, 35 – *Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.... Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"* Peter made the same mistake his Jewish ancestors had made 1,400 years earlier. How foolish!

Don't Speak Before You Think!

- Genesis 42:37 – *Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him [Benjamin] back to you."* Did Reuben really think that Jacob would kill two of his grandchildren to replace Benjamin? This is very ridiculous.
- Exodus 16:3 – *And the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."* Isn't this the same group of people who hated their slavery in Egypt and wanted out in the worst way (Exod 2:23)? Answer: Yes! How soon people forget the kindness of the Lord!
- Exodus 32:24 – *"So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."* Clearly, Aaron (or others) had to form the calf from the melted gold. He knew that he wasn't fooling God or Moses, and he still came up with this doozy.
- 1 Samuel 1:8 – *And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"* Speaking of doozies, Elkanah's clueless words to his barren wife, Hannah, cause any out-of-touch husband to think, "Even I know not to say something like that!"
- 1 Kings 22:24 – *Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD go from me to speak to you?"* Some background: Ahab (king of Israel) and Jehoshaphat (king of Judah) were planning a joint military campaign against their common enemy, Syria, and they decided to consult with their prophets to see if they should go to battle. Zedekiah and the rest of the false

prophets said, "Yes! Go for it!" One true prophet of Yahweh, Micaiah said, "No! You should not go to war!" This verse is Zedekiah's ridiculous retort after hearing Micaiah's prophecy. He was so ignorant and self-deceived to think that he, as a false prophet, could presume that he ever had the Spirit in the first place.

Don't be Ignorant!

- John 13:8 – *Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."* Peter did come by his foolish statements with sincere but misplaced piety. His previous knowledge about Jesus should have kept him from being so dull when it came to following Jesus's example.

Don't Reject the Lord!

- Matthew 27:25 – *And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"* The ultimate warning in our list comes from this most outrageous utterance in the Bible. The people asked Pilate to release Barabbas, the terrorist, and to crucify Jesus instead. Ironically, they desperately needed the propitiatory blood of Jesus to forgive their sins, but they wanted guilt instead of justification. How utterly preposterous!

May God help us to heed these warnings couched in these preposterous statements so that our words and our actions demonstrate the way of wisdom described in God's Word.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
