

SCOFFERS AND mockers

—by Dr Peter Hammond

THERE IS A RISING TIDE OF ANTI-CHRISTIAN INTOLERANCE worldwide. Through Hollywood films, in the news media, in all too many schools and universities, Christians are being labelled, ridiculed, blamed and discriminated against. Christophobia – an irrational hatred and fear of Christianity – is a reality. One tactic often used to silence Christians is ridicule. This encompasses everything from insults and name calling, to character assassination and blasphemous mocking of Bible stories.

We shouldn't be too surprised about this. The Bible tells us that even as the Lord Jesus was dying on the cross for our sins: *"Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save Yourself!"* Mark 15:29 – 30

Throughout the Gospels we read of mockers and scoffers who even sneered at the Lord Jesus Himself. *"The pharisees, who love money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus."* Luke 16:14

"Many of them said, 'He is demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to Him!'" John 10:20

The Bible warns us not to allow the world to squeeze us into its mould, instead we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:1 – 2).

The human heart is naturally inclined towards folly. We are all too easily enticed by folly's seductive appeal. But the book of Proverbs makes clear that foolishness leads to sin, shame, servitude, punishment and destruction. It produces bitterness, grief, sorrow and ruin. Foolishness transforms its followers into scoffers, mockers, perverted and impetuous persons who oppress others. We are warned to avoid folly as a contagious disease.

Even a superficial reading of the Bible will make it abundantly clear that God despises mocking and scoffing. In fact, the Word of God declares: *"The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures."* Proverbs 30:17

At the mount of Crucifixion at Calvary there were three crosses. Initially, the criminals being crucified on either side of Christ mocked Him and hurled curses at Him. Then one of the

criminals rebuked the other man saying: *"Don't you fear God... we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.'"* Luke 23:40 – 42

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There were three crosses at Calvary: one died on the cross of rebellion – he died in sin. One died on a cross of repentance – he died to sin. Jesus died on a cross of redemption – He died for sin.

If you have been one of those in rebellion, scoffing and mocking at spiritual truths, you can follow the example of the man who died on the cross of repentance – and die to sin. If you recognise foolishness in your life, the Scripture challenges us: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,*

who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." James 1:5

We all need more wisdom. And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

May I challenge you, to work your way through the book of Proverbs. This treasure trove of wisdom is in the middle of the Bible, just after the book of Psalms. There are 31 chapters to Proverbs, enough for us to read one chapter everyday of the month. Prayerfully read through the book of Proverbs over the next 31 days and it will change your life.

Theodore Roosevelt pointed out:

*"It is not the critic that counts;
nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled;
nor where the doer of deeds could have done better.
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena;
whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;
who strives valiantly;
who errs and comes short again and again;
who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions
and spends himself in a worthy cause;
who at best knows the triumphant of achievement;
who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while doing greatly,
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls
who know neither victory nor defeat!"* ■

***"But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts."* Jude 1:17,18**

