

*Illusions and Realities* (Isa 50:4-10; Mr 8:31-35; Jas 2:18)

\* Today I start by telling you a real story from my childhood. At that time I was a preschool student. Some of my classmate owned a water gun. Even now I remember how it looked, with all its specifics. It literally charmed me by the green transparent color that allowed seeing water and small parts inside of the gun. But most of all I was interested with the tricks it produced. The gun could strike everything around twelve feet away by squeezing out the thin water shells. I offered my mom many reasons to buy such a gun. Furthermore, I addressed this request many times. I talked about it with a positive expectation, and I fully imagined how it would effectively work against my classmates with whom we played a war. One day I heard the news when my mom arrived to take me from the daycare, she smiled at me with the *Mona Lisa's* lips. She said, *I bought something for you.* The first idea that flashed across my mind pointed to the green water gun, my heart's desire. *What was that?* I asked with the great expectation. She answered, *be patient, when we get home, you will see.* But my patient run away from me quiet soon. Again and again I asked, *mom, come on; tell me, what did you buy, please?* But she refused to answer me. In a half hour or so we got home and mom showed what she bought. It was ... guess what? I bet you've never guessed! It was a pair of stockings made of cotton. Then, upon seeing that ordinary thing, I was deeply frustrated and cried with tears. After all, I didn't remember that I had wished for the water gun anymore. This example disproves the common view that if people make a strong wish about something and fix their eyes on it, they will receive it.

\* Actually this viewpoint is not mine, it originates from *The Law of Expectation*. As I read, it states that *whatever you expect, will come to you. Expect to achieve success, and you are more likely to. When you expect that good things will happen, they usually will. If, on the other hand, you expect a negative outcome to a situation, then the outcome will usually be negative.* But this Law doesn't work in my life, and it doesn't work in the lives of many people whose stories I read from the books, on the Internet and from our Sunday readings. In view of what I was saying before, we'd better stay away from being preoccupied with the wrong ideas regarding the Law of Expectation. Friends, ask yourselves, does the victorious life in Christ Jesus depend on our strong expectations?

\* Now, according to the old tradition, we ask the Lord for help and guidance. Dear Lord Jesus, we ask you, bring the light of truth upon people who trust in your holy name, upon people with whom you make the New Covenant. Give us the acknowledgment of you as the only one source of all goodness. Teach us how you will not be disgraced by us but meet your gracious expectations on us; then your flock will exalt You forever because of the faithfulness of Your love. Amen.

\* Friends after praying we've been prepared to make a tour of knowledge and assurance. So we start from (Isa 50:4-10) that is our Sunday reading. It portrays the faithful spokesman of the Lord who is well-set in the accepting of God's words. We noticed that our text doesn't convey the direct message from the Lord. However, we can reconstruct that message after considering carefully the man's expectation.

*Tell them, says the Lord of hosts, that they rebellious house and they will not meet their expectations. Soon I will drive into them, (the paraphrase of Eze 17:12). But you are my servant; don't be afraid, you will meet glad expectations, (the paraphrase of Isa 10:24,25). In response to God the man declares, I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back, (v.5). No doubt, the man will meet his expectation, (v.9) first he would be mocked, spit upon, knocked down and so forth. But it is not the end, he will enter in the glory of his Lord after all, (Isa 49:13). Here is another group of people under the horizon. They still walk in the dark but they are not a rebellious house; after hearing the message they would trust in the name of the Lord and obey him, (v.10). Certainly they also will meet glad expectations. Therefore, the key for meeting expectations entirely relies on the Lord who benefits the people because they believe and obey his Word; But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you, (Eze 2:8). In sharp contrast with the faithful servants, we see the rebellious house of Judah in its time of tribulations. Indeed the Jews hoped and believed that their nation was accepted, secured and significant. In spite of that they didn't meet their expectations many times, as for example when the king of Babylon seized and overthrew Jerusalem in 587 B.C. That caused great frustrations among the Jews; or when Jerusalem fell to Pompey in 64 B.C.; or when the city fell to Titus and millions Jews suffered death in that war in 70 AD. Again, in spite of the fact that Jews believed in their acceptance, security and significance, they didn't meet their expectations! Friends all these calamities are historical facts, they are not a matter of our beliefs. Don't you see that *The Law of Expectation* doesn't work, even for the people of Israel, because they were a rebellious house. And of this I am perfectly certain.*

\* When I am again thinking over the sufferings of our Lord, I cannot imagine how they were painful and offensive. As for myself, I how painful it is after receiving a hit in the face. Friends, my face is very sensitive compared with other parts of my body. And with this in mind I wish you to recall the suffering of our Lord. There were the 40 days of temptations by flesh and the devil; Christ's rejection and betraying, mocking and spitting, being punched very hard; being stripped naked; flogging into blood and finally his agony on the cross. Now ask yourselves, Did the Messiah anticipate all these horrible things? Of course he anticipated! *Through the prophet Isaiah the Spirit says, Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting, (Isa 50:5,6). Here Isaiah portrayed Messiah, the Lord Jesus.*

\* Unlike Jesus, Peter didn't give his ears to the Son of God. Upon hearing the message from Jesus he said, *God forbid, Lord! This must never happen to You!* (Mat 16:22). In view of this fallen expectancy and those in the past with regard to the protection the city of Jerusalem from Babylonians and Romans, I want to recall to you the last fallen expectations; on this point they will occur in the future. They will have a tremendous impact upon individuals who may now associate themselves with Christianity. It shouldn't surprise us that some "Christians" will not meet their expectations in the eschatological future, in spite of their strong assurance and

expectations that they are exceptional persons. The Word of God says on this account: *On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness,'* (Mat 7:22,23).

\* Dear Friends, if you want to meet glorious expectations in this life and in the life after death, we must give our ears to Jesus; even much more than ears! Give Jesus your mind, hearts and your life on top of all, (Mr 8:35). Along side of the theoretical faith, Christians have been urged to carry their crosses, (v.34). The early Church understood the cross as a person's willingness to practically identify oneself with Christ and to be willing to face even suffering and death like the bishop of Antioch Ignatius did, for example. When Ignatius became the bishop, he anticipated to suffer more as the servant of the Lord than to be pleased as a teacher and high ranked clergy. He even anticipated to be torn into pieces by wild animals. Significantly, he met his expectation! He was torn into pieces by wild beasts in Rome around 110 AD.

\* At the end I stored the two questions for you. Friends, when we decided to devote our lives to Christ, then, apart of the forgiveness our sins and everlasting life, what did we expect, something *healthy-wealthy* or did we expect the sufferings for the sake of truth and the Gospel? If you've already met and not rejected God's will, you are blessed with whatever your heart desires, and much more, (1Co 2:9). Second, take a moment and investigate your identity with Christ. Answer yourselves, Who are you? Are you accepted, secured and significant by virtue of your beliefs in such things or because your faith is working out such things? According to (James 2:18) it says, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. Friends, the Law of Expectation doesn't work even for Christians if they only believe, you must work such things!

\* We believe that by virtue of our identification with Christ's sufferings, (not theoretically but practically) -- his resurrection will be ours as well. "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too," (2Co 1:5), today, (Isa 50:7-9) and in eternity, (Joh 8:52).

Beloved let the grace of the Lord's will pour out upon you abundantly, so that His work in you meets His expectations now and in eternity.

Amen