

## Exhortation 9: Christ Rejected

Charles Herle (1598-1659)  
Matthew 27:29

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. Christ Given a Reed as a Scepter

1. “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matt. 27:29).

a) One of the more interesting observations of the passion of Christ is that his persecutors preferred to mock him as a, “false king,” rather than punish him as a true malefactor.

*(1) Their bowings, their buffetings, their robes, their crown, and their scepter are little more to them than the several acts of their tragic comedy where they spurn his kingdom and rant, “hail King of the Jews!”*

*(2) But the reed they put in his hand as his scepter is the last, and possibly the worst mockery of all, for it strikes specifically at what is nearest him – the mutual interest between himself and his followers, which is to say, his truth and their trust.*

*(a) Isaiah 36:6 compares trusting in the pharaoh of Egypt to trusting in a staff of a dry, sapless reed – hollow, fruitless, helpless. This is why presenting Christ with a hollow reed as his scepter to complete the image of him they wanted to portray no doubt broke his heart more than all the rest.*

b) And yet, what those who put this reed into his hand did not know is just how easily he could have transformed it into a rod of iron to break into pieces their renowned Roman scepter.

*(1) Or how easily he that worked amazing wonders with a rod in the hand of Moses could have worked more and greater miracles in his own hand on them! For “the hand of the Lord is not shortened,” (Isa. 59:1).*

c) But in the end, they could give him whatever scepter they desire, for there is no power – nor lack thereof – in that staff itself; his truth is not affected by it in the least.

### II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: Neither the sword nor the scepter matters without the strength of the arm behind it to wield it.

1. Even if the scepter is made of straw, in the hand that spans the heavens and weighs the mountains, (Isa. 40:12), it is able to accomplish anything God desires.

a) For it is God’s way to use the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.

2. From the beginning of time, there have been those who mocked the claims of God and of his Son, (2 Peter 3:3).

a) But when Christ comes to judge the earth, what will become of these mockers?

b) How will they feel when they see this King of Glory no longer bearing the shame and suffering of his passion, but clothed with majesty and honor, riding on the wings of the wind with an everlasting scepter of power in his hand, (Psa. 18:10)?

(1) Full of dread and fear, they will cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, (Rev. 6:16), and hide them from his presence, but they will not be heard. They will have no place to run for shelter.

(2) Instead, they will hear his voice from heaven, glorious and mighty enough to break the loftiest cedars, laughing them to scorn (Psa. 2:4).

e) Nothing is more odd with God's kingdom than that which a hollow, withered reed represents.

(1) Isaiah calls his kingdom, "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest," (Isa. 32:1-2).

(2) Paul calls it a kingdom that cannot be shaken, (Heb 12:28), a kingdom that does not consist in word or form only, but in power, (1 Cor. 4:20).

(3) Further, in God's kingdom there is fulness of joy, (Psa. 16:11), and it is so plenteous in goodness and truth that our needs can never deplete his bounty, and neither can his bounty ever empty his storehouse.

(4) For he is the water of life, (John 10), and the source of life abundant, (John 4:14, 10:10).

d) The blessed Lord and Savior is a great tree of life!

(1) How contradictory to his nature is it, then, when he is given a dry, dead reed as the scepter of his kingship.

(2) In truth, all other scepters bow, obey, and owe themselves to his scepter of righteousness, for they could have no power if it was not given them from above, (John 19:11).

(3) Why then did his hand willingly accept this mockery of majesty?

(4) Was he, even here, demonstrating his mercy by not breaking this bruised reed? (Isa. 42:3).

3. Men are bruised with the weight and the conscience of sin.

a) And though God tries his people with difficulties and afflictions, he will not break them with utter destruction, nor burn them up among the tares with unquenchable fire.

b) He has promised that he will not consume them, (Matt. 12:20).

(1) He shows the strength of his almighty arm, in supporting the bent and bruised reeds in his hand.

(2) He cursed the green, leafy fig tree, (Matt. 21:19), and yet he accepts and protects the weak and bruised reed.

4. One of the most amazing and comforting truths surrounding the passion of Christ is that everything that occurred between his arrest in the Garden and his death on the cross at Calvary was foreordained to the letter by God the Father.

a) So, when Christ's enemies yell out, "Hail, King of the Jews!" what they do not know is that even in their mockery they are declaring the truth of God and his gospel. For not only is Christ King of the Jews, he is Lord of all, (Phil. 2:10).

b) Further, though the scepter they placed in his hand at his trial was only a withering reed, he still used it to deal a death blow to the head of that serpent the devil as prophesied in Genesis 3:15.

c) Not only was Christ's passion and death foreordained by God in eternity past, his victory over death and hell and the devil was predetermined in the mind and will of God as well.

(1) So, even as these hypocritical religious leaders and pompous government officials ridiculed and buffeted the Lord whom they prided themselves in arresting and sentencing to death, they were playing out perfectly the role God had ordained for them to carry out in his grand plan of redemption, (Acts 2:23).

5. Christ was falsely accused, but he did not open his mouth to defend himself against his accusers because he chose to willingly bear the guilt and shame of the sins of all those who would follow him by faith.

a) He withstood the beatings and accepted the accusations so that going forward no one in heaven or earth could ever rightfully accuse his own before God (Rom. 8:33).

### III. The Text Applied

A. When Satan attempts to testify against us in the court of heaven, Christ steps up to the Judge's bench and holds out his scarred hands.

1. Nothing that Satan can throw at us has any power or merit, because Christ took the punishment for us.

a) Neither can the law bring any charge against us because Christ also fulfilled the law.

b) Though he was completely innocent, sinless, and guiltless, he bore all the travesties and beatings and ridicules of his accusers willingly so that he could become sin for us (a sin offering), that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

*(1) And in doing so, he conquered sin and death and Satan once for all, fully accomplishing what God sent him to do to the letter.*

c) And when the time of his kingdom is at hand and he returns to set up his throne in Jerusalem, every one of his children will reign with him because we are more than conquerors through him, (Rom. 8:37).

*(1) Further, his scepter then will not be a hollow reed but a mighty staff, a rod of iron, a golden scepter, that, when wielded by the King of kings, will subdue every aspect of nature as well as every creature under his command, for this scepter is an everlasting scepter, (Heb. 1:8), and of this Kingdom there shall be no end, (Isa. 9:7).*

d) Let it be that our obedience from here forward shows our humble reverence to his kingdom because of the power, majesty, and terror of its everlasting scepter.

e) And even if the obedience of blessed angels and the reverence of crowned saints out-strip us in magnifying its power and glorifying its majesty, may it be that the Lord does not let the faith of damned devils, "out tremble," us at its terror, (James 2:19).

f) His scepter, with which he governs his kingdom of grace is his word of righteousness and truth.

*(1) So, may he help us arm both our mouth and our heart with the truth of his word so that when encountering Satan and his temptations, using his own tried weapon against him, he shall never be able to swallow us up into the bottomless gulf of despair nor throw us down from the slippery pinnacle of presumption.*