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Elizabeth I's Speech to her Last Parliament (The Golden Speech).

Elizabeth I, 1601

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QUEENE
ELIZABETHS
SPEECH
TO HER LAST
PARLIAMENT.

The 30 of November 1601; her Maiestie being set vnder State in the Councell Chamber at Whitehall, the Speaker, accompanied with Privy Councillours, besides Knights and Burgesses of the lower House to the number of eight-score, presenting themselves at her Maeisties feet, for that so graciously and speedily shee had heard and yeilded to her Subiects desires, and proclaimed the same in their hearing as followeth.

Mr. Speaker,

EE perceiue your comming is to present thankes vnto Vs; Know I accept them with no lesse ioy then

V your loues can haue desire to offer such a Present, and doe more esteeme it then any Treasure of Riches, for those Wee know how to prize, but Loyaltie, Loue, and Thankes, I account them invaluable, and though God hath rayseed Mee high, yet this I account the glorie of my Crowne, that I haue reigned with your Loues. This makes that I doe not so much reioyce that God hath made Mee to bee a Queene, as to bee a Queene ouer so thankfull a People, and to bee the meane vnder God to conserue you in safety, and preserue you from danger, yea to bee the Instrument to deliuer you from dishonour, from shame, and from infamie; to keepe you from out of seruitude, and from slauerie vnder our Enemies; and cruell tyranny, and vilde oppression intended against Vs: for the better withstanding wherof, Wee take very acceptably your intended helpes, and chiefly in that it manifesteth your loues and largenesse of heart to your Sovereigne. Of My selfe I must say this, I neuer was any greedy scraping grasper, nor a strict fast holding Prince, nor yet a waster. My heart was neuer set vpon any worldly goods, but onely for my Subiects good. What you doe bestow on Me, I will not hoard vp, but receiue it to bestow on you againe; yea Mine owne Properties I account yours to bee expended for your good, and your eyes shall see the bestowing of it for your welfare.

M^r. *Speaker*, I would wish you and the rest to stand vp, for I feare I shall yet trouble you with longer speech.

M^r. *Speaker*, you give me thankes, but I am more to thank you, and I charge you, thanke them of the Lower-House from Me, for had I not received knowledge from you, I might a fallen into the lapse of an Error, onely for want of true information.

Since I was Queene yet did I neuer put my Pen to any Grant but vpon pretext and semblance made Me, that it was for the good and availe of my Subiects generally, though a private profit to some of my ancient Servants who had deserved well: But that my Grants shall be made Grievances to my People, and Oppressions, to bee priuiledged vnder colour of Our Patents, Our Princely Dignitie shall not suffer it.

When I heard it, I could give no rest vnto my thoughts vntill I had reformed it, & those Varlets, lewd persons, abusers of my bountie, shall know I will not suffer it. And M^r. *Speaker*, tell the House from mee, I take it exceeding gratefull, that the knowledge of these things are come vnto mee from them. And though amongst them the principall Members are such as are not touched in private, and therefore need not speake from any feeling of the grieffe, yet We haue heard that other Gentlemen also of the House, who stand as free, haue spoken as freely in it, which giues Vs to know that no respects or intrests haue moved them other then the mindes they beare to suffer no diminution of our Honour, and our Subiects loue vnto Vs. The zeale of which affection tending to ease my People, & knit their hearts vnto vs, I embrace with a Princely care farre aboue all earthly Treasures. I esteeme my Peoples loue, more then which I desire not to merit: And God that gaue me here to sit, and placed me ouer you, knowes that I neuer respected my selfe, but as your good was conserued in mee; yet what dangers, what practices, and what perills I have passed, some, if not all of you know: but none of these things doe mooue mee, or euer made mee feare, but it is God that hath delivered me.

And in my gouerning this Land, I haue euer set the last Iudgement day before mine eyes, and so to rule, as I shall be Iudged and answer before a higher Iudge, to whose Iudgement Seat I doe appeale in that neuer thought was cherished in my heart that tended not to my Peoples good.

And if my Princely bountie haue beene abused, and my Grants turned to the hurt of my People contrary to my will and meaning, or if any in Authoritie vnder mee haue neglected, or converted what I haue committed vnto them, I hope God they will not lay their culps to my charge.

To be a King, and weare a Crown, is a thing more glorious to them that see it, then it is pleasant to

them that beare it: for my selfe, I neuer was so much inticed with the glorious name of a King, or the royall authoritie of a Queene, as delighted that god hath made me His Instrument to maintaine His Truth and Glorie, and to defend this Kingdome from dishonour, dammage, tyrannie, and oppresion; But should I ascribe any of these things vnto my selfe, or my sexly weaknesse, I were not worthy to liue, and of all most vnworthy of the mercies I haue receiued at Gods hands but to God onely and wholly all is giuen and ascribed.

The cares and trouble of a Crowne I cannot more fitly resemble then to the Drugges of a learned Physitian, perfumed with some Aromaticall sauour, or to bitter Pils guilded ouer, by which they are made more exceptable or lesse offensiue, which indeed are bitter and vnpleasant to take; and for my owne part, were it not for Conscience sake to discharge the dutie that God hath layd vpon me, and to maintaine his glorie, and keepe you in safetie; in mine owne disposition I should be willing to resigne the place I hold to any other, and glad to be freed of the Glory with the Labors, for it is not my desire to liue nor to reign longer then my life and reigne shall bee for your good. And though you haue had and may haue many mightier and wiser Princes sitting in this Seat, yet you neuer had nor shall haue any that will loue you better.

Thus M^r. *Speaker*, I commend mee to your loyall Loues, and yours to my best care and your further Councils, & I pray you M^r. *Controullor*, & M^r. *Secretary*, and you of my councill, that before these Gentlemen depart into their Countreys you bring them all to kisse my Hand.
FINIS.

