

# Isaiah 50 - His Faithfulness

So far we have studied the first Servant Song (Isaiah 42.1-9) which concerns the **character** of the Servant and the second Song which emphasises the **work** of the Servant. This Song (50.4-9) primarily highlights the Servant's **faithfulness**.

The **chapter** might be divided as follows: the Perverse Servant (vv.1-3, the Father speaks), the Perfect Servant (vv.4-9, the Son speaks) and the Pattern Servant (vv.10-11, the Holy Spirit speaks). The **Song** itself can be divided by the occurrence of the phrase 'Lord GOD' (vv.4, 5, 7, 9), but is possibly better divided as follows: the Perfect Servant is, Conversant with the Word of God (v.4), Committed to the Will of God (vv.5-6) and Confident of the Help of God (vv.7-9). All this emphasises His Faithfulness to the Work of God.

## Context

vv.1-3 of the chapter introduce the nation of Israel as the Perverse (or failing) Nation. They have been unfaithful in their service, but the Perfect Servant is ever faithful. Note some of the following contrasts:

The Perverse Servant	The Perfect Servant
Suffering for sin and rebellion (50.1)	Suffering for faithfulness and obedience (50.6)
Charged with offences (50.1)	Cannot be charged with any offence (50.8-9)
Doubts the Lord (50.1-3)	Confident in the Lord (50.7-10)
Does not heed the Lord's call (50.2)	Ever listening (50.4)
Fails to respond to the Word of God (50.2-3)	Ever obedient (50.4-5)

## Conversant with the Word of God (v.4)

4 *The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should (may) know how to speak a word in season (sustain) to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear (attend) as the learned.* The Lord Jesus has the tongue of the 'learned', 'instructed', 'them that are taught', or a 'disciple's tongue' (Isaiah 8.16). It is a tongue which is trained as well as educated. He knows **what** to speak and **how** to speak it! The *purpose* for which He has this tongue is that He might know how to 'help', 'sustain', 'hasten to' or 'lift up' them that are 'downhearted', 'discouraged' or 'weary'. The *reason* He has this tongue is because 'morning by morning' (lit. 'in the morning, in the morning'), that is continually, the Father 'wakeneth' or 'stirs' His ear to 'hear' His word. There is much to be learned from this verse! For example:

- This verse is the answer to *John 7.15-16: The Jews were amazed and remarked, "How does this man know all this—he has never been taught?" Jesus replied to them, "My teaching is not really mine but comes from the One who sent me.*
- His words had the primary purpose of lifting up or comforting those who were discouraged or weary (cf. Matthew 9.36, 11.28, Luke 5.5, 22.32, Hebrews 12.3, 5). In this respect, note that the Lord Jesus is the Divine Lifter Up of Heads. That is, He is the One who is able to lift the bowing head which may be overwhelmed by sin or sorrow and bring comfort or help (cf. 1 Samuel 28.2, Psalm 3.3, 110.7, 140.7, Luke 18.13). Any ministry we might give should primarily be positive and uplifting.
- The Lord Jesus learned the truth He spoke from His Father (John 6.44-45, 7.16, 8.28, 38, 12.49, 14.10, 24, 17.8). What He said was no product of the philosophical or Rabbinical schools of theology! Anyone which speaks the truth of the Word of God has learned it from God. The mouth with which He spoke so graciously was the product of a disciplined morning by morning appointment. This is "the standard curriculum for all disciples". Might it be that the Lord Jesus learned daily those things which He should speak as He spent times of communion with the Father (Psalm 5.3, Mark 1.35, 6.46, Luke 6.12)? Before we can be teachers and preachers we must be disciples and learners. Let's take time to be "with Jesus" (Acts 4.13).
- Note that the ear of the Lord Jesus was wakened 'morning by morning'. This indicates a constant action by God. To the prophets God spoke intermittently (Hebrews 1.1), but to His beloved Son He spoke continually. The obedient and faithful disciple is able to receive manna from heaven on a daily basis. It is manna which is suited to every disciple and is 'according to his eating' (Exodus 16), that is, as much as we need! May it be that we don't miss our daily portion!

## Committed to the Will of God (vv.5-6)

5 *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*

6 I gave (willingly offered) my back to the smiters (those that struck me), and my cheeks to them that plucked (tore) off the hair: I hid (covered, protected) not my face from shame and spitting.

The ear of the Lord Jesus was not just 'wakened' (v.4) but also 'opened' (v.5) indicating that He has not only heard, but listened to the word of the Father, something which He demonstrated by obedience. How often do we hear, but not truly listen? Note. Psalm 40.6: Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; **mine ears hast thou opened (digged): burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.** 'Opened' here is a different word in the Hebrew which signifies being 'pierced', i.e. His ears were an open passage to the word of God and He continually obeyed the things which He learned (Exodus 21.6, cf. James 1.19-24).

The obedience of the Lord Jesus is evidenced by the following statement, 'I was not rebellious (an inward attitude), neither turned away back (an outward result)'. He was not 'rebellious', that is He was not 'disobedient' or 'made no resistance' **inwardly** to the Word of God (any hindrances to His accomplishment of the Word of God came from without, not from within). As a consequence He fully obeyed **outwardly** in action and did not 'turn back' (Matthew 26.39, John 8.29, 14.31, 15.10, Hebrews 5.8, 10.7). We too, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, should not be rebellious towards the Word of God, e.g. Moses (Exodus 4.10), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20.7), Jonah (Jonah 1.3). Even more solemnly, we should never turn back from a work begun for Him (cf. Luke 9.62, John 6.66-68).

Verse 6 demonstrates the absolute obedience of the Perfect Servant. This striking prophecy was written 700 years before Christ and was fulfilled to the letter. Note three aspects to His suffering recorded here:

- 'I gave my back to the smiters'. Note that He 'gave'. These are voluntary sufferings and circumstances in which the Son of God was in full control. They struck His back with scourges so that it resembled a ploughed field (Psalm 129.3, Matthew 26.67, 27.26, Mark 14.65, Luke 18.31-33). According to the book of Proverbs, this was the treatment reserved for an **ignorant fool** (Proverbs 10.13, 19.29, 26.3).
- 'My cheeks to them that plucked (tore) off the hair' (cf. Isaiah 52.14). This was one of the greatest insults known in the ancient world (cf. Lamentations 3.30). The beard was regarded as a symbol of freedom and respect. To pluck out the hair was degrading and insulting and demonstrated utter contempt. A scriptural example is found in 2 Samuel 10.4 where Hanun, King of Ammon, took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards. According to Keil & Delitzsch: "with the value universally set upon the beard by the Hebrews as being man's greatest ornament, the cutting off of one-half of it was the greatest insult that could have been offered."
- 'I hid not my face from shame and spitting'. 'Shame' refers to the verbal insults and taunts. 'Spitting' was considered to be insulting when done in the street, let alone in someone's face which demonstrates absolute contempt (Job 30.10). Christ was spat on by the Jews in the High Priest's palace (Matthew 26.67) and by the Gentiles in the Judgment Hall (Matthew 27.30).

The Perfect Servant suffered all this without resistance. He did not turn back. Peter tells us that we too are 'partakers of Christ's sufferings' (1 Peter 4.13). Not that we can share in His atoning sufferings, but we do and will suffer for living a righteous life before unbelievers (1 Peter 3.14, 4.4).

#### Confident of the Help of God (vv.7-9)

7 ~~For~~ (and) the Lord GOD will help (sustain) me; therefore shall I not be confounded (overcome by mockery and sufferings): therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed (He will be vindicated).

8 He is near that justifieth (vindicates) me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

9 Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

The victory of the Servant was assured by His dependence on and confidence in His God. Despite all of His suffering He knew He would accomplish the will of the Father and so set His 'face like a flint'. This speaks of firm determination (see Luke 9.51). Nothing could deter Him from fulfilling the work of God. He knew that He would not be 'ashamed' and would be vindicated in a coming day (cf. Acts 2.32-33, Philippians 2.10-11).

This confidence in God is further exemplified in the court scene of vv.8-9. The Father is 'near' (actively participating on His side) that 'justifieth' Him. Many of the enemies of the Lord Jesus thought He was unrighteous and suffering for His own sins (Isaiah 53.4). But, the Justifier is at hand and ready to declare Him just by His resurrection and ascension and future glory. The cry goes out! Who can 'contend'? Who has a case ('adversary') or can testify against Christ? Who can 'condemn' (pronounce judgment on) Him? Remember that the whole world gathered together against Christ to pass sentence on Him (Acts 4.26). Their response was 'away with Him, crucify Him' (John 19.15). Their end is corruption. Praise God He is declared righteous on the basis of Who He is, but we too are declared righteous **in Him**. Romans 8.33-34: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again...*