



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND].



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Evening 23rd March 2008.

"Justice Demanded and Justice Answered."

Scripture Reading Isaiah Ch 53:7

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

The Prophet Isaiah has been described by many as the ‘*Evangelical Prophet*.’ That title being ascribed to him on account of the focus and the content of his prophecy. Isaiah presents in his sixty six chapters the most distinct references to the ‘*evangel*’ or Gospel. The latter end of his prophesy (*Chs 40-66*) in particular pays special attention to the Gospel in the New Testament age, e.g. **Ch 40:3** - the ministry of John the Baptist and the reception of the preached word. Since there is this New Testament application of his prophesy, we readily expect the content of his writings to be infused with Christ, since Christ is the chief focus of New Testament ministry. Certainly we find as we read his prophesy, our minds are constantly being impressed by frequent references to the person of our saviour, chapter after chapter. Now if there is one chapter that presents to us what we might refer to as a ‘*Christological high watermark*’ it is the 53rd chapter of Isaiah’s prophesy. Here we are brought to the very heart of the ‘*gospel*’, to Christ Himself Dr. Michael Barrett states “*Although not in every line, and not on every page, yet the message of Christ overshadows the entire O.T.*” Here preachers ought not to fail in their presentation of Christ, such is the clarity of the language. Consider Philip’s employment of Isaiah Ch53 in *Acts Ch8:35*, “*And Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.*” Clearly Philip saw that this passage was highly charged with Christ! In Philip’s estimation Ch53 embodied Christ. Isaiah Ch53 points us step by step in the work of Christ, His birth, His sufferings, His bearing away of sin, His agonising death, His being crushed by His Father...all to the end that He might see the travail of His righteous soul and justify many. In this message I want us to consider one aspect of His work, set forth in v7, ‘*His Oppression*’ and ‘*Affliction*.’ There is great benefit in considering this verse, it was through understanding these words the Eunuch was converted.

The words “*He was oppressed, and He was afflicted.*” can be read in another way, giving a more emphatic application, “*It was exacted and He answered.*” The force of the words are seen by the examination of some scriptures. (a) *2 Kings Ch23:33-35 Relation to Tribute. Tribute - To Inflict a penalty (punish/a fine etc).* “*And Pharaoh-nechoh...put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.*” v34, Eliakim is named Jehoiakim, v35, “*Jehoiakim taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land...*” (b) *Deut Ch15:2 Relation to Debt.* “*And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release.*” (c) *Exodus Ch1:11, Relation to Labour - The word ‘taskmaster’ from same root,* “*Therefore they did set over them taskmasters (exactors) to afflict them with their burdens.*” The thought of oppression in the requiring of labour. The word ‘*Afflicted*’ - Means to answer or satisfy. Isaiah’s choice of language demonstrates to us what Christ was actually engaged upon as He was oppressed and was afflicted, Christ was actively answering a debt. Christ answered, even though we are told He opened not His mouth, the answer that Christ gave, silenced the justice of God forever in relation to His Covenant people!

1) There was a debt Demanded by the Father of Christ. ‘*He was oppressed*’

Christ is said to be ‘*oppressed*’, as noted the word indicates the pursual or exacting of a debt. In order to understand what that particular debt was, we first need to understand why Christ was oppressed. In the context Isaiah reveals that Christ’s oppression was due to an obligation that He had undertaken. That obligation was to be the surety and substitute for sinners. This obligation was a:

i) *A Covenant Obligation.* The time when Christ obliged Himself to be the substitute for sinners takes us back to the covenant of redemption in eternity past; to the Triune Counsel of God when the second Person of the Trinity pledged Himself to be the one who would become the substitute for sinful men, who would bear their sin and have laid on Him by the Father their iniquities. Isaiah says in **v6** that “*Jehovah hath laid (made to meet) on Him the iniquity of us all.*” Sin and iniquity carry a debt, sin is the transgression (*offence*) of the Law, that law requires that amends be made. Man owes payment to the law, He cannot give it, the Law of God is brutally oppressive towards the sinner in its demands, it pursues the sinner for retribution for requital relentlessly. But by covenant appointment the guilt of men’s sins became Christ’s, “*He made Him to be sin for us*” the Father laid it upon Him, iniquity and guilt became His by imputation [transferral]. It was that covenant relationship that made Christ liable to the oppression of the broken Law. Justice pursued Him. Being the substitute in their

“*Sinners may oppose God’s ways, but not God’s wrath.*”
 ...Thomas Watson...

room, justice instead of pursuing its claim, against the sinner, turns on Christ, sentence is passed against Him, He is both liable and answerable for the debt. Having laid upon the Son the iniquities and transgressions of sinners, God the Father proceeded to justly exact from Christ the payment that was due for that sin.

His being oppressed was in reality the following up of a debt, the pursual of a liability, a liability that was not His own but was His by covenant obligation. Justice now gives a commission to its revenge to pursue the just instead of the unjust. He stood as one liable to the curse of that law, a law to which all men are answerable, now turns from men to Christ and demands an answer.

2) **Justice Received Its Answer.** *‘He was afflicted.’*

His oppression and His suffering were according to His engagement to be the surety and substitute for His people. He was legally accountable/responsible for their debt. He is answerable for their guilt. As noted one meaning attributed to the word *‘afflicted’* is *‘to answer.’* Payment was demanded and He answered. The affliction of Christ was His answer to the debt of men’s sin. How else do we explain the sufferings of Christ?

The scripture reveals at least three distinguishable types of suffering. (a) *There is what we call calamitous suffering. Luke Ch13:1-5.* Calamity is suffering that befalls man by the providence of God (*catastrophe, tragedy, disaster*), R.J. Beggs, *“We may not be able to trace the mind of God, but we can always trust God.”* It is not related to sin, or guilt, its infliction therefore is not to be seen as judicial or disciplinary or corrective. Suffering of that nature does not explain the sufferings of Christ. Christ’s death and sufferings were not a personal tragedy, nor were they a providential occurrence. (b) *The second aspect of suffering is Chastisement.* Heb Ch12:6-11. This relates to the believer. The reason for Chastisement is not secret or unknown as in the case of calamity. Its purpose is that of moral improvement, 1Cor Ch11:30-32, Chastised for their abuse of the Lord’s Table, *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”* The reason as to why they suffered affliction was well known. The end/purpose of Chastisement is the moral and spiritual improvement of the Child of God. The sufferings of Christ cannot be placed in this category, as He was perfect needing no spiritual correction or improvement. (c) *The Third aspect of suffering is that which is inflicted due to guilt and sin (Penal suffering).* The purpose of penal suffering is the satisfaction of justice. It was that kind of suffering that Christ was enduring. His suffering was according to justice. *“The soul that sinneth it shall die” Ezekiel Ch18:20.*

Unlike calamitous, providential suffering or disciplinary, corrective suffering Christ’s suffering was wholly retributive and penal in nature. During His life on earth and then on the cross, Christ was giving answer to a debt that He had willingly obliged Himself to undertake. As the Father brought to bear all His wrath upon the saviour at the same time Christ was giving an answer to that debt. He answered the demands of the law in His sufferings. At the judgement seat, God will require an answer from you sinner if the answer be not already given in Christ! Even then you will not give an answer, you will pay that debt throughout eternity, only Christ can give payment to this incalculable debt.

It is an amazing thought, to think that all the way through His life on earth and then on the cross, Christ was giving answer to a debt that was not His own, but a debt nevertheless that He had willingly obliged Himself to undertake. I say *‘willingly’* because twice in v7 we read *“He opened not His mouth.”* The silence of the Lamb. This declares the obedience that Christ was giving.

3) **Willing Obedience was given.** *“He opened not His mouth.”*

Twice we have the expression *“He opened not His mouth.”* Payment was exacted, justice was executed yet He opened not His mouth. Many when explaining this part of the verse give the impression that He restrained His speech. The phrase, *“He opened not His mouth”* implies more than a resistance within Himself to seal His lips and refrain from crying out against His oppressor, *‘father this is unjust that I should suffer’* the words rendered aright mean that it was not even to be found within His righteous soul to seek for an aversion of justice *‘Father this is thy covenant will and I give myself to its fulfilment.’* The words *‘led like a lamb to the slaughter’* imply much more than meekness and innocence...a readiness and willingness. As the full justice of God poured out of heaven upon His soul, how did Christ react? *“He opened not His mouth.”* Father this is just,

“The point is not that the world is so big that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it, but that the world is so bad that it takes an exceedingly great kind of love to love it at all.”

...R.B. Kuiper...

this is right...He owned the obligation that He had laid Himself under, He bore the punishment that was due and He paid the debt without any dispute.

Just pause for a moment and think about the mouth of Christ. A holy mouth and holy lips in which was found no guile and from which there proceeded nothing impure, a tongue which hath not sworn deceitfully. 1Peter Ch2:22-23, *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not, but committeth Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.”*

See how the false witnesses revile Christ before the High Priest [Matt Ch26:61], *“This fellow said I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”* Denying and challenging his resurrection of which He spoke [John Ch2:19]. High Priest to Christ [v62-63], *“Answerest thou nothing...but Jesus held his peace.”* [see also Mark Ch14:61; Mark Ch15:5], when the chief priests accused him of many things before Pilate, He refused to answer! Christ whose power of speech and words could have blown their evil designs apart chose to remain silence in the presence of His accusers. Why? He keeping silent Christ was answering not for himself but for his people! He must die, he must countenance the lying reports of men. What a marvel for Christ to have to listen to every lying, mendacious word, yet remain silent!

See how the Lamb of God stands in the palace of the High Priest [Luke Ch22:64] where they pummel the face of Christ [the word struck relates to a cudgel, fist or hammer - the action is repeated] with repeated blows. They provoke Christ to speak and prophesy who it was, yet he spoke not one word, much less threatened them with what he could do to them! Compare the tongue of Christ to the tongues of those He came to save, even yet...How do we deal with a rash tongue? By remembering Christian, that Christ opened not His mouth for you!

Do not forget that all the while the Father stood by watching, no Father would stand by and watch his child being savagely beaten, yet knowing that the end result of the savage oppression of Christ would be the redemption of a sinful people. The thought often occurs to me, why God would let his son endure all that for me, that blows the mind! How can people say *‘is God a God of Love?’* God must have *‘so loved the world’* in an unfathomable degree, to watch on and not act.

However, there is coming a day very soon when the Lamb will remain silent no longer! There is coming a time when Christ will let them know, with vengeance, who it was that smote him; though patiently he took it from them, He gave his back to the smiters, His cheeks to be beaten, he did not then threaten his crucifiers with a future judgment, but when He they as every man will, stand in the judgement hall, not of an earthly high priest, but that of the Great High Priest! Then see how Christ reacts, as he bursts forth in fury upon His enemies.

God’s justice soars high like mountains, it is insurmountable by man, what God requires of man, man cannot give. My God graciously give sinners the grace to fly to Christ...

By. Paul Thompson.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

Hebrews 10:16