

ISAIAH 42

“BEHOLD MY SERVANT!”

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold!” (verse 1) When our Lord Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant, and began to wash the feet of His disciples; it was no new office that He performed – for His life was always one of service and of ministry. Without a doubt, this passage in Isaiah’s prophecy is speaking of our Savior. The Holy Spirit, by the Evangelist Matthew, directly refers these verses to Him; and He teaches us that their meaning was filled to the brim by that matchless life which cast its radiance upon our world for a brief time (Matt. 12:18). O that He Who took upon Himself the form of a Servant would so dwell in us, that we may imitate those features of His earthly ministry!

There are some rare qualities which Jehovah calls us to behold in the servant in whom His soul delights: a Divine modesty, a Divine humility, and a Divine perseverance. First, let us consider the *modesty* with which the Lord’s servant will do his or her work. God is always at work in our world – leading the progress of the sun, refreshing grass with dew, directing the flight of the morning beams and the glancing light of the firefly, watching over our paths, and determining the fall of the shell upon the sands of the ocean-bottom. But all of this work is done so quietly and so unobtrusively! He spreads the breakfast-table each morning for myriads – in the woods, in the oceans, and in the homes of human beings. But we never catch a visible glimpse of Him to Whom we owe all. And this quality is God’s hallmark-seal upon the best work of His servants, too – the work which neither seeks nor needs advertisement.

But the Lord also desires us to notice the *humility* of the best work. God’s choicest dealings have been with shepherd-boys who have been taken fresh from their flocks, with youngest sons who have no hope of fame or notice in the world, and with maidens growing to beauty in the obscurity of some highland village. He has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek! And so it was with our Lord Jesus. He passed by Herod’s palace, and chose Bethlehem and its manger-bed for the place of His birth. He refused the empires of the world, and took the way of the cross. He selected His Apostles and disciples from the ranks of the poor. He revealed His choicest secrets to babes. He left the society of the Pharisees and scribes; and He expended Himself upon bruised reeds and smoking flax, upon dying thieves and fallen women, and upon the peasant-folk of the Galilean countryside.

Let us not forget to consider the *Divine perseverance* of true service for the Lord God. Although He is principally concerned with the bruised reed and the

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A prophecy of Christ, the suffering Servant, and His work – verses 1-8
- ❖ A prediction of great joy and rejoicing – verses 9-12
- ❖ A description of the victory of Christ’s Gospel over the devil – verses 13-17
- ❖ A warning is given to all who reject the Lord Jesus – verses 18-25



dimly burning wick, He Himself is neither one nor the other! He is never discouraged, nor does He fail in His work. This is also a characteristic of the best work for the Lord. The work which emanates from the flesh is full of passion, fury, and impulse; but it soon exhausts itself, and sinks back without any energy left. But perseverance in the face of scorn and difficulty, in the teeth of pitiless criticism and obsti-

nate hate, up the hillside or across the swamp – this serves to illustrate that the task has been Divinely given, and that the ardent soul is fueling its strength from Divine resources.

Such are the Divine principles of Christian work and service. And they need to be studied by each of us, if we desire to hear God say of us – as He has already said of the Lord Jesus – “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!” But characteristics such as these three which we have just considered – no matter how excellent they are – will be of no use to us until the blessing of the Holy Spirit has been added to them (verse 1).

Beginning in verse 13, we seem to have a prophecy of the great things that God would do to prepare the way for His children to sing His praises (verse 12). To begin with, He would appear in His power and glory – more than ever before. Thus did our Savior in the preaching of His Gospel, in the Divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success that it had in the pulling down of Satan’s stronghold (verses 13-14). And as a prophetic picture of this great spiritual deliverance of His people, the Lord undertook the redemption of the captive Jews out of Babylon. But He would not only appear in His power and glory, He would also manifest His favor and grace toward those whose spirits He had stirred up to follow Him (verse 16). He will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In addition to all of this, the Lord promised to particularly put those persons to confusion who worshiped idols – notwithstanding the attempts made, by the preaching of the Gospel, to turn them away from their false gods (verse 17). And even today, we may see many examples of how idolatry falls before the preaching of the Gospel, and is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun.

Having spoken words of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews, who waited for the consolation of Israel; the prophet turned (verses 18-25) to those among them who were unbelieving, and he spoke words of conviction and humiliation to them. These unbelieving Jews were a picture of all – both Jews and Gentiles – who reject Christ and are rejected by Him. Let us pray for grace that we may not be among this number!

Thank You, Jesus, for showing tender love to Your people; for You will not break or extinguish us, even though we are like bruised reeds and smoking flax! Amen.