

“The Servant’s Obedience”

The Suffering Servant

Isaiah 50:1-11

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April 15, 2022

Jeff: All right; why don’t we pray before we get started? Our Father in heaven, we are thankful for this day, for the blessing of Your presence in our lives. And we’re thankful, Father, for Your word. We know that we can turn to it and that it’s a safe place because it’s a good word to us. We also know that it’s a comfort to our hearts. We pray, Father, that You’ll continue to preserve it as You have preserved it over these many years. We pray, Father, that You will continue to use it. We know that Your Spirit will take it up and use it in the lives of men and women and children. We pray for that, especially in the life of our country. The West has enjoyed living on the laurels of the morality that comes from a foundation that was situated upon Your word and upon the belief in it. And that has slowly deteriorated over the years until we are where we are now. And Lord, we pray that we as a country would repent and return to the good Word that is Yours, and that we would find not only the ability to live rightly in this country in that Word, but we pray that Your Spirit would take it up and use it in the conversion of many in this country.

Father, we ask that You would bless our leaders. Your word tells us to pray for them, and so we do. We ask that Your hand would be upon them. And we pray, Father, that they would be exercising good leadership, that they would see themselves as Your stewards as Romans 13 says, and that they would be protectors of the good and not the evil. We pray, Father, that they would in fact punish the evil and that they would reward the good.

Lord, we ask that You will bless us today. And certainly bless Christ Church as they have a water leak to contend with now. We ask that You’ll give them not only wisdom but manpower and means. And Father, we pray that this wouldn’t be a huge disruption in the ministry of the church.

Father, we pray for Don our brother as he brings the Word today to Providence. And we ask, Lord, that Your hand would be upon him as he preaches Your word. We pray certainly that You would edify Your people. But we also pray that if there are any in the congregation who need to hear that Word in a saving way that You would bring it to them in power.

Father, we’re certainly mindful of our brother Bruce. And we pray for him even as he fails in health. We’re so thankful for His courage and strength. And we ask, Lord, that You’ll bless him and continue to uphold him.

Father, we pray for many others, and certainly Kevin comes to mind. We ask that Your hand would be upon him. And Lord, we pray for Bob and ask that You’ll continue to be with him and make him well, and many others. And Lord, we ask now that You’ll bless us in Your word, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, let’s turn to Isaiah 50 today, Isaiah 50. And Isaiah 50 is where we are in the process of looking at the Servant songs. And so I want us to look at Isaiah 50 today, and I’ll read it. I’ll read the first eleven verses; let me do that now.

“Thu says the LORD:

‘Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce

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*With which I sent her away?
Or which of My creditors is it
To whom I have sold you?
Behold, for your iniquities you were sold,
And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.
Why, when I came, was there no man?
Why, when I called, was there no one to answer?
Is My hand shortened, that it cannot be redeemed?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Behold, by My rebuke I dry up the sea;
I make the rivers a desert.
Their fish stink for lack of water,
And die of thirst.
I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And make sackcloth their covering.’
The LORD God has given Me the tongue of those who are taught,
That I may know how to sustain with a word
Him who is weary.
Morning by morning He awakens;
He awakens My ear to hear as those who are taught.
The Lord GOD has opened My ear and I was not rebellious.
I turned not backward.
I gave My back to those who strike,
And My cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I hid not My face from disgrace and spitting.
But the Lord GOD helps Me,
Therefore I have not been disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like flint,
And I know that I shall not be put to shame.
He who vindicates Me is near;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand together.
Who is My adversary?
Let him come near to Me.
Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me;
Who will declare Me guilty?
Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment,
And the moth will eat them up.
Who among you fears the LORD
And obeys the voice of His Servant?
Let him who walks in darkness and has no light
Trust in the name of the LORD,
And rely on his God.
Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
Who equip yourselves with burning torches.*

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*Walk by the light of your fire
And by the torches that you have kindled.
This you have from My hand:
You shall lie down in torment.”*

All right. Well, let’s look at this. And one of the things that I want us to do as we think about this text is that I want us to take just a brief quiz. I think that when you think about questions like this it’s oftentimes helpful to kind of situate your thinking. So here’s a quiz. It’s fun, but it’s not inconsequential. And I want you to think about the answer; I want you to lock it in. You guys are good men; I know you know the answer. So humor me and just take the quiz anyway. *(Laughter)*

The quiz is a one-question quiz; here’s the question. The question is true or false. See, it’s easier than anything. True or false: Salvation is by works.

Some Brave Men: False.

Two Brave Men: True.

Jeff: Wait a minute. I said lock it in and don’t tell me. *(Laughter)* All right. Is salvation by works? If your answer is locked in—and for some of you it is!—I want you to know that the answer is yes.

Ted Wood: It sure is.

Jeff: The answer is yes; salvation is by works. Now here’s the rub.

Jim Hamilton: Whose works?

Jeff: Now most of you are saying to yourselves, “Wait a minute. That’s not true: salvation is not by works.” We’ve been told this time and time again; it’s been pounded into our heads repeatedly. It is not by works. “That guy’s wrong! Why have I been wasting my time coming here Friday mornings listening to this kind of garbage?” *(Laughter)*

Ted: Jeff’s a heretic. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Jeff’s a heretic! *(Laughter)* Now hold on! Salvation is by works, but it’s not by your works.

Sig Tragard: Amen!

Jeff: It’s by the work of Christ, right? And we know that to be true because the Bible tells us that it’s true. For instance, when we think about Christ, when we think about Him being many things, we think about Him in terms of His offices. We think about Him in terms of His estates. But one of the ways that we think about Christ is in terms of His position as the second Adam. And 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that. He is the last Adam or the second Adam, the *eschatos* Adam.

Now what do we mean by that? Well, what we mean is that you can sum up the whole Bible in terms of two people: the first Adam and the second Adam. The first Adam was put in a garden and given a command not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden. If he failed he would be expelled. If he did not fail he would thrive, and we would be his posterity.

However, he did fail. And so a second Adam comes. And we find Him not in a paradise but in a wilderness. And we find Him being put to the test by the same serpent. And the serpent says, “*If You are the Son of God.*” “We know that the first Adam failed to be the son of God. But if You are the Son of God, then—“ And then Christ withstands the temptation, and he gains victory through His obedience.

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Now one of the things that we realize is that the second Adam had to do something the first Adam did not have to do. The first Adam did not have anyone’s sin to atone for; he wasn’t already living under the curse. All he had to do was render obedience to the commandment.

Jesus has to render obedience to the commandment, but that’s not enough. I want you to think about this for just a minute. Oftentimes we encounter that temptation story at the beginning of the gospel. Jesus the second Adam has victory over that temptation. And we wonder. Why isn’t that the marker of our salvation? Why isn’t that sort of the thing that we wear around our necks instead of a cross? Why isn’t it a desert, right?

And the answer to that is very simple. The answer to that is yes, He obeyed God, and that’s a marker of victory. But He has not yet suffered for His people. In other words, the people who He is representing are under the curse of Adam, having failed to do what he was supposed to do. And Adam’s posterity is now under the curse.

And so Jesus not only has to obey. But He has to suffer for the sake of His people—us—in order for us to be saved. So it’s a two-Adam story. Christ is that second Adam who obeys on our behalf.

And so you know this. We basically have the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Adam represents the covenant of works, Jesus the covenant of grace, and so on. But all of that is to say that we are saved by work—not ours, but we’re saved by the work of Jesus Christ.

Now here’s the point of this. The point of this is that Isaiah 50 describes for us what we might call both the active and the passive obedience. In other words, what we find, say, in the beginning of the Gospel—the temptation account and the obedience therein—we also find in the suffering of Christ at the end of the Gospel. And here Isaiah 50 brings those two aspects together—the obedience of Christ and the passive suffering of Christ. And so what we find in Isaiah 50 is really a wonderful story compacted together, that this is what the Messiah will have to bear; this is what He will have to do.

Okay. So that’s what I want us to think about. And as we think about it I want us first of all to divide the obedience of Christ into two ways of thinking about it: one obedience. Christ offered one obedience for our salvation.

However, we think about that in a couple of different ways. You have to have categories in order to think about things, right? If you don’t have categories then your thinking is very limited.

For instance, one of the ways that we think about God is that we think about Him in terms of *ontologically* and *economically*. Why do we do that? There are not two different Gods. Why do we talk about the ontological Trinity, or God in His very being, and God in His work?

Well, we do that because we don’t want to push things that are temporal up into the eternal Godhead, because that would be an incredible mistake. But it’s not that there are two different Gods; it’s that there are two different categories for thinking about what God does. And that helps us to avoid error.

Well, in the same way we have two different ways, or two different aspects that we think about the obedience of Christ. So yes?

Ted: Jeff, would you define ontological?

Jeff: Ontological?

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Ted: It’s the essence of a thing, the being of a thing, right?

Jeff: Right.

Ted: But what does economical mean?

Jeff: Economical is the idea of domestic or work. It is the idea of how things are ordered in the house. And so if you think about what God is in terms of who He is apart from creation. Before creation we think about God ontologically. When we think about God with regard to creation we think about Him economically. We think about how He is in terms of His relationship to the created order.

Ted: And that’s because the word *economic* comes from the Greek word *oikos*, which means “the house.”

Jeff: Right.

Ted: So it’s the activity that goes on day in and day out, right?

Jeff: Yep.

Ted: And ontological means that which goes on with the being or essence of God.

Jeff: Yeah. And so you have to think about it like that because again, there’s one God. But you have to think about it like that because once you start saying that God and time mix together you have a real problem, because how is it that we keep God outside of time, which is what the Bible affirms about Him. And yet He interacts in time. And one of the ways we do that in a very finite way of thinking about it, is that we say there are two different aspects to the being of God. One aspect is how we think about Him eternally, apart from creation. Another is how we think about Him involved in creation.

And we realize there is only so much we can say about that because the finite mind can’t contain the infinite of God. And so we have to think in categories. Categories are the way that we make up for the inability to think about a topic in its depth. We can only make fine distinctions with categories and things like that to help us; that’s all we can do.

So when we think about Christ’s obedience we think about His one obedience. But we say that there are two different aspects to that obedience. There’s the active obedience of Christ and there’s the passive obedience of Christ. And what we mean by that is that we mean that the active obedience has to do with His keeping of the law in the way that Adam failed to do—an active law keeping.

But when we think about His passive obedience we think about Him as suffering under the curse for His people. Those are the two different ways we think about the obedience of Christ.

I want to think about the active obedience first of all. So the obedience of Christ that we see in terms of His active obedience is here in the text. And what we find is, we find the active first laid out for us in the text.

I want us to think about how you see this. First of all, notice in the text that we have this talk about the Servant having listened to God. Look at what it says; it’s actually very wonderful. He says:

*“Morning by morning He awakens My ear
To hear as those who are taught.”*

And so here we have the listening ear of the Servant. Now why do we have the listening ear of the Servant pictured in the way we do?

There are a couple of really interesting things here. I want you to turn with me to Psalm 40.

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Ted: Psalm 40?

Jeff: Yes, Psalm 40. And then after you find Psalm 40 I want you to keep your hand there. And then I want you to find Hebrews 10.

Sig: Hebrews 10?

Jeff: Hebrews 10. Just take a look at this. Hebrews 40—I mean Psalm 40; I’m adding to the Scripture! Psalm 40:

*“In sacrifice and burnt offerings You have not delighted.
But You have given Me an open ear.
Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.
Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come;
In the scroll of the book it is written:
‘I delight to do Your will, O My God;
Your law is within My heart.’”*

Now that is quoted in Hebrews chapter 10. So flip over to Hebrews chapter 10 and notice how this verse is introduced to us. Look in verse 5. *“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said.”* Now this is the Psalm that’s being quoted—Psalm 40 that we just read. And yet because the Psalms are the word of Christ this is attributed to Christ. Why? Because as the inspired Scriptures know, the triune God is behind them.

So listen to this; listen to the way it’s quoted.

*“Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired,
But a body You have prepared for Me.”*

Now that’s different, isn’t it? The Old Testament says, *“But You have given Me an open ear.”* The New Testament says, *“But body You have prepared for Me.”*

Why the difference? Well, obviously because the Hebrew is giving us an idiom. You know, it’s those idiomatic expressions. Can you give me an idiomatic expression, something that is used by us today?

Ted: Keep your nose to the grindstone.

Jeff: Keep your nose to the grindstone.

Sig: He was saved by the skin of his teeth.

Jeff: The skin of his teeth. These are the kinds of expressions that I try to never use at the seminary because there are so many Chinese students there. *(Laughter)* They stare. They go, “I don’t have skin on my teeth.” Right? *(Laughter)*

So these are idioms. And what we find—and this is one of the most challenging things about translating from, say, the Old Testament or even the New Testament—is, is this an idiom and how do you translate it? Well, the fascinating thing is that the inspired writer helps us with this particular idiom, because when he says, *“An ear you have dug for me,”* or *“an ear You have prepared for Me,”* it’s idiomatic. In other words, the ear is representative of the whole.

And so the ear that’s dug, that’s carved out like clay, is indicative or idiomatic of an entire body being prepared for the Servant. And so here in the New Testament we’re told that the ear that was dug was idiomatic for a body being prepared.

Now here’s the question that we have to ask ourselves, and this is one that’s really important: What for? For what purpose was that ear dug out or that body prepared?

Well, here’s the answer to it; it’s right in our text. It’s in either Psalm 40 or Hebrews chapter 10. But listen to what it says in verse 6 of Hebrews 10.

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“A body You have prepared for Me.

In burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God,

As it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.’”

And there is the answer right there. “A body prepared for Me, that I might do Your will, O LORD.”

Now think of that. Think of that in relation to what we’re looking at in Isaiah 50. Here we’re talking about a Servant who comes to render obedience, the obedience Adam failed to render. How is He going to render that obedience? Embodied. He needs a body to do what was written of Him in the book. It wouldn’t do us any good to have a disembodied Jesus running around, would it?, because we wouldn’t know Him; we wouldn’t be able to see Him. He would be disembodied, invisible to the naked eye, right?

But here we have Jesus who comes and assumes what He is about to redeem. In other words He takes upon Himself flesh so that He might redeem flesh. So He has a body prepared for Him that He might offer obedience to the will of God.

And so our text says:

“Morning by morning He awakens My ear

As those who are taught.”

Taught to do what? The will of God. And then he goes on to say this, and this is in verse 5. “He opened His ear.” Catch this; back to Isaiah 50.

“I was not rebellious;

I turned not backward.”

What is He saying? I’ll tell you what He’s saying. He’s saying that He was sinless! He was sinless in His obedience! “I wasn’t rebellious; I did not turn backward.” So now we have a sinless expression of obedience.

And remember what I said earlier: it’s salvation by works. And we’re rightly to say not by our works. But it is by His work. And what He’s maintaining is that He has offered a sinless, upright obedience. I mean, that’s the absolutely wonderful thing about this—absolutely wonderful!

There’s one more thing that I want you to catch before we move on from this particular aspect, and it’s this. Notice what he says; this is in verse 4.

“The LORD has given Me

The tongue of those who are taught.”

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. Not only has the Lord given Him the ear of a disciple, the ear of a listener, so that in the embodied state that He’s in He might offer obedience. But the Lord has given Him a tongue, a tongue as those who have been taught.

Now what does that mean? Well, I want you to think about this. What does the text say? The text says that He is able to sustain with a word the weary one. In other words, He is able to take what He has been taught and He is able to sustain those who are weary.

Now think about the gospel in this regard. In other words Jesus comes onto the scene. Not only is He an obedient Savior, but He preaches the gospel and people are amazed! This One doesn’t teach as the Scribes or the Pharisees. This One teaches as if He really knows what this text is saying. That’s the kind of thing that we find here, right? So He’s teaching the weary with a word; He’s sustaining them.

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I want you to think about this for just a minute. Basically you have these two ideas: the idea of listening with the ear of a disciple, and you have this speaking with the tongue of one who has been taught.

Now those two ideas are expressive of a larger concept. In other words, what is it that we are being told? Well, you find something similar for instance when you look at the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler goes to Jesus and says, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

And Jesus says, “Well, you know.” And He rattles off some of the commandments. And the young man says, “Well you know, I’ve done all of those since my youth. What are you talking about?”

And Jesus says, “Okay, smart guy.” Mark says that He loved him. And you know what John Gerstner says. John Gerstner says, “He loved him because he was stupid.”
(Laughter) Right?

So Jesus says this to him. He says, “Okay, I’ll tell you what. Go and sell all you have and give it to the poor. Then come follow me.”

Now what is Jesus saying to this young man? Jesus is saying to this young man, “Go and sell all you have and give to the poor.” What’s He saying? “Love your neighbor.” And then, “Come follow Me.” What’s He saying?

Rich Clark: Love the Lord.

Jeff: Love the Lord your God. Now think about it. Sometimes we’re given a broader concept like the two commandments in an expression that you need to think through in order to get there.

Well, what we have here in Isaiah 50 is that same sort of thing. An ear of a disciple and a tongue of one who has been taught to sustain the weary. The ear of a disciple fulfills loving God, right? I am a disciple of God. I am a listener and an obedient Servant of God. But I minister to My neighbor, to the weary, with My tongue that has been taught.

And so in those two expressions you get the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments. I obey God; I love My neighbor. I obey God by hearing and obeying. I love My neighbor by speaking a word into My weary neighbor’s life.

So that’s the idea. And it really does challenge us, doesn’t it, because we’re always looking for ways in which to serve God and love our neighbor. And we ought to because those are the two greatest commandments. And this is one of those ways that I think basically builds itself out into practical application for us.

I mean, think about it for just a minute. If we did the same thing Jesus did, if we just emulated Him at this point, we would be so far ahead in terms of obedience and love.

Think about it. If I just get up every morning and listen to what the Scriptures teach, so that I might speak a word from a tongue that’s been taught to the wearisome life of my neighbor, I’m doing pretty well, aren’t I? And I’m thinking in terms of the two greatest commandments. I just think that’s a really helpful application to us. I think that sometimes we don’t think about doing our devotions in the morning as fulfilling the first and greatest commandment. But we are. I think we ought to think about speaking a good word in season to our neighbor, an encouraging word. That’s loving our neighbor. So anyway, do you have any questions about that before we move on? Yes?

Ted: Jeff, I have a question.

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Jeff: Sure.

Ted: These are some of my profound insights. But I think it’s interesting; I love what you’re saying. I’ve been teaching Exodus for about a year-and-a-quarter.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: We’re in Exodus 33 and the importance of works.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: The rich young ruler says, “I’ve done all these things since I was young.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And Jesus could have said at that point, “Believe in Me and you will be saved.” He doesn’t say, “Well, if you’re doing the best you can you’re going to make it. Trust God.” He actually gives him another law that he can’t fulfill.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And he just adds on to it.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: He was saved by works. Otherwise Jesus would have said, “No, you’re doing good. You know what? Salvation is really all about coming to Me and giving your heart to Me.” But He didn’t say that.

Jeff: No, because the fact of the matter is that the rich young ruler has to come to the end of himself before he can take up with Jesus.

Ted: He has to be desperate for God.

Jeff: And so that’s the purpose of the law. You know, people don’t like the law today. But they don’t like the law today because the uses of the law just aren’t taught anymore, right? And one of the uses of the law is to drive us to Jesus Christ.

I mean, that’s the whole point of Galatians, right? Paul is asking that question: Why the law? And he even frames it in a way that invites our own perplexity. The law is given 430 years later than the promise is given. Why the law?

And his answer is that the law drives us to the promise. In other words, once you realize that you can never obey the law you have to fall back on the promise. And that’s what I think Jesus is doing there. He’s saying to the man that He’s upping the ante, right? Did you ever play—

Ted: Carney?

Jeff: No. What’s the game where you go underneath the thing and you lower it?

Brave Man: Limbo.

Jeff: Limbo. Did you ever play Limbo with that guy who can do every level? And so you lower it until it’s two inches off the floor? Do that one, smart guy!, right? In other words some guys just have to go really low to get to the point where they realize they just can’t do it. And you know, did you ever lower it down like this, where it’s five inches off the ground, and the guy’s like “I can do that!” And you’re like “Really?” (*Laughter*) That was years ago with this man. (*Laughter*)

But my point is, there are people who will look at the impossible and say, “I can do that.” And here’s this rich young ruler. He’s pretty much like that guy. “I can do that.” And he can’t do that.

So Jesus just elevates it to the point to show him. “All right. Show me, tough guy. Go and sell everything you own and give it to the poor. Come, follow me. Be a wanderer.

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Follow Me around as I teach these disciples. And then, once you come to the end of yourself, then you’ll pick up with Me.”

And that’s the thing, you know? We always talk about reaching bottom, you know. Everybody has different bottoms, right? Everybody has different bottoms. And yet the same bottom for everybody is when they come to the end of themselves. No matter how deep it is they come to the end of themselves. And they realize that the only One who can save me is Christ.

And the difference between Him and us is this. He says this in verse 9. *“Who will declare Me guilty?”* Nobody, right?, because He wasn’t rebellious and He didn’t turn backward.

Who will declare us guilty? Well, just about anybody we meet, right? And so that’s the idea.

So we have captured here in this first point the Servant’s active obedience. And now we move to the Servant’s passive obedience.

And what do we mean by passive? Think about the word “passive” and its relationship. When we think about the word “passive” it’s related to the word “patient” in Latin; it has that same kind of derivation. When you think about patient you think about somebody working on somebody else, right? If I’m a patient in a hospital I’m being worked upon, right? I’m acted upon by another.

This is why we say that God is without passions. When we say that God is without passions, what we don’t mean is that God is acted upon by external factors. In other words God is without passions. And if He is independent of creation and He’s immutable, then creation doesn’t act upon Him, or He wouldn’t be God. He is without passions.

Now you say to me, wait a minute. God gets angry because of sin. Right. But we’re talking—and this is where I can bring it in—we’re talking ontologically.

But now God has created. And there’s a whole creation. And the creation is not like Him. The creation cannot contain in its mind what He can contain in His mind. So He accommodates Himself.

Do you know what I’m talking about? You get that little grandchild coming over. And that little grandchild squeals. And you go (*gibberish*), and he goes, (*gibberish*).

But if you tell him, “Honey, do you know what Grandpa does? He’s an engineer, and he builds things. And let me tell you some mathematical equations about what I do.” And they’re going, “Aaaaaah!”, right? But as soon as you go, “Aaaaaah!”, they go, “Aaaaaah!”, right?

And God does that; He accommodates. He stoops down and he lisps to us, says Calvin. He talks in our speech. And He talks in such a way that we’ll understand Him. He can’t tell us all that’s in His mind as to His own being or our heads would explode. Literally the Finite cannot contain the infinite. And so God bends down and He lisps and He speaks.

But we have to keep in mind that God as He is in Himself cannot be acted upon by His own creation. He is independent of it. It depends on Him, not Him on it.

Now He’s got to explain in a lisp sort of way how it is that He involves Himself with His creation. And so He does it in our way of understanding.

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So for instance, you know the Bible says in one place that God repented, in Jonah. The Bible says in another place, in 1 Samuel, that God is not a man, that He should repent or change His mind. Which is it?

We have to think about aspects. One is talking about an aspect of God that is just as true as the other aspect of God. But one is an accommodated way of speech and the other is not. Okay?

So here we find Christ’s passive obedience. Now what we mean is this. Here Christ comes, and He is worked upon by external factors as our Savior. What are the external factors? Well, the external factor is that the curse for sin is laid upon Him. He did not bring it upon Himself; He was sinless. Remember, He didn’t turn back; He wasn’t rebellious.

But if He was going to be our Substitute and grant us forgiveness, sin had to be brought upon Him. He was passive in that it was laid upon Him, poured out upon Him, okay? That’s the idea. So that’s what we know of as His death on the cross.

And it’s there that He is still in control. We think about Him being under the weight of sin. And yet He gives up His Spirit to die. That’s the idea of passivity in death. We see the control of Jesus in the whole story; it’s wonderful!

Now let’s think about this for a minute. We know why He died. He died because He was under the penalty of Adam’s sin for us. And He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. And He came not only to obey but to endure the penalty of death.

Now I want you to just notice some things out of this. First of all, notice that there is a willingness to suffer on the part of the Servant here. In Philippians 2:8 for example, “He was obedient” *“even unto death, death on a cross.”* Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 26 verse 67 says, *“Then they spit in His face and struck Him. And some slapped Him.”*

Go back again to Isaiah 50. In verse 6 it says:
*“I gave My back to those who strike Me,
And My cheeks to those who pull out My beard.
I hid not My face from disgrace and spitting.”*

Matthew 27:30: *“And they spit on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, then they stripped Him of His robe and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him away to crucify Him.”* Mark 14:65 says the same thing. Luke 22:63 says something similar.

In other words, what we find is this willing Servant who gives Himself over to be spit upon, and so on. Notice again, for instance, verse 6: *“I gave My back to those who strike Me.”* “It wasn’t taken from Me. I gave it so that it could be laid upon Me.”

There’s this sense again; remember what I said. Even in the passivity of His obedience there is a sense in which Jesus is very much in control. On the cross He gave up His spirit.

But here in this text we see that same thing. *“I gave My back to those who would strike Me.”* The idea is that He wasn’t thrust into this position by men. His time had come. And He was taken by men because He had given Himself to those men, that He might be a suffering Servant on our behalf.

Notice verse 7 for instance. This comes right out of the Gospel of Luke. Or I should say that the Gospel of Luke takes this statement right out of Isaiah. Luke 9:51 says, *“He*

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set His face like flint toward Jerusalem.” And here we find in verse 7 that His face is like flint.

*“But the LORD helps me,
Therefore I have not been disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like flint,
And I know that I shall not be put to shame.”*

And so there’s a willingness on the part of the Servant to suffer. And then secondly notice the Servant’s help that He experiences.

Now this is something that I want you catch in its importance. And I’m just going to say it unless you have questions about it. But we oftentimes talk about that on the cross the Father turned His back on the Son. But I want you to realize something: that the Father and the Son share the same essence.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: And there is never a point in time where there could have been an actual divide between Father and Son. But the Son as to His mediatorial work has the Father turn His back upon Him as the second Adam. As He is in the role of the second Adam, so He turns His back on Him.

Have you ever experienced it? You may have experienced it in this way, in an accommodated way. Think of the guy who coaches a baseball team. And he says to his son, “Son, you and I will always be father and son. But when we’re out on that team I can’t show partiality to you. I have to treat you this way. My face will be set toward you like any other player.”

And so in terms of essence they’re never divided. But as to role, Father and Mediator, we now see the Father turning His back on the Mediator, on the Son in that sense.

John Owen says it like this as to the essence of God. He says, “*The Father loves and cannot but love His own nature and essential image in Him,*” that is, in the Son. In other words, there’s an impossibility of Father and Son as to essence having a breach within their relationship. And so we need to think about this—can I say it like this?—economically, as God through the Son is redeeming us. And as the Son is Mediator the Father turns His back on Him. That’s the idea.

And then thirdly the Servant’s resolve; notice the Servant’s resolve. “I’ve set My face like flint; I’ll not be put to shame.” Ultimately the shameful death on the cross is where He finds Himself. And yet He’s not going to be put to shame. Why? Because think of it this way. He dies not for His own sins but for the sins of others. In other words, remember what I said to you. If you can go back to last week, He doesn’t share our condition; He shares our estate. And before a Judge we are not only sinful, but before a Judge we are guilty.

Jesus as to His condition is sinless. But standing in our stead He is declared guilty and treated as such. However, death is the curse for disobedience. And once He’s dead, death has no claim on Him. It can’t hold Him because He’s innocent! And so how can death which is the curse hold an innocent Man? It cannot. And so He comes to life, right? He comes to life because death cannot hold Him. And we not only then die in Him, but live in Him.

And so we find that moves us to the Servant’s vindication.

Ted: Jeff?

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Jeff: Yes, please.

Ted: Does that mean that death can hold us because we are guilty? Death could not hold Him because He was innocent.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: Death holds us because we are guilty.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: Okay.

Jeff: You have to go back to Adam. What is the curse? It’s death; death is the curse. So when you die that’s under the curse. And yet that’s why as Christians we can say, “death for a time.” But even our bodies *“rest in their graves as in their beds”* because even our bodies are united to Christ. And our souls are present with Him as 2 Corinthians 5 says, and will be reunited with our souls—1 Thessalonians 4—at the coming of Christ again.

And so, you know, we don’t see all things put under His feet right now. And yet the victory has been won. We just haven’t seen the consummation of it yet.

And then look at the Servant’s vindication. The Servant’s vindication is in verse 8. *“He who vindicates Me is near.”* It’s foreign to us to think about it that way. We don’t really think about vindication. For instance in 1 Timothy 3:16 we talk about it. This is an interesting text; let Me just read it to you. Depending on which translation you use, some texts will have “vindication”, some will have “justification.” I think “vindication” is actually more helpful. Let me read verse 16.

“Great, indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,

Vindicated by the Spirit.”

Some of your translations may have *“justified in the Spirit.”*

Now I want you to think about this for a minute. What does that mean—justified in the Spirit? Well again, declared not guilty. In other words, as our Substitute He paid the penalty. And He received because of His innocent condition what? The declaration of not guilty. And so in Him we receive that same sentence, that same justification.

And therefore, when you think about a text like Isaiah 50, or a text like 1 Timothy 3:16, the thing to remember is this. My justification is not something that I possess outside of Christ. Why? Because my justification is really not my justification. My justification is Christ’s justification which He shares with me. That’s the idea. I share the benefits that Christ earned.

This takes us back to the idea of works again. Is salvation by works? Not mine, but Christ’s. And so Christ works to accomplish our salvation, and so receives all the benefits of salvation which He shares with those who are in union with Him.

So salvation is not like a door prize. In other words it’s not “come and get your salvation, and then you sort of disappear and we never see you again.” It’s not like that. Salvation means that I come and I then share a faith union with Jesus Christ. And on the basis of that union I share in communion with all of His benefits.

But that means that I do that in context with the people of God, the body of Christ, and so the church. You see how all of this flows together. I think it’s just a wonderful thing.

And so we find this kind of thing in Ephesians 1:3. Ephesians 1:3 says that we possess all the spiritual benefits that are in Christ.

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And then let me just hasten on to #5: the call to trust the Servant. Look at this; I want you to just see this; this is really powerful. I’m actually going to start in verse 11. I want you to look at verse 11; listen to this.

*“Behold, all who kindle a fire,
Who equip yourselves with burning torches:
Walk by the light of your fire,
And by the torches that you have kindled.”*

And then He says this. He says, *“This you have from My hand.”* In other words, believe this. *“You shall lie down in torment.”*

In other words, what’s He saying here? He’s saying, “For those of you who are idol worshipers, for those of you who find your trust for something other than in Me and the Servant I promise, you go ahead and light your own fires. You worship your own gods; you do your own thing; you go your own way. Go ahead. But you walk by the light of that fire. And I want you to know that when you walk by the light of that fire you will lie down in destruction.”

But then go to the verse prior to that.
*“Who among you fears the LORD,
And obeys the voice of His servant?
Let him who walks in darkness and has no light
Trust in the name of the LORD,
And rely on his God.”*

Don’t you love that? If you’re in darkness, don’t try to kindle your own torch. In other words, don’t try to find your own way, spiritually speaking, through an idol or some other such thing. But you trust in Christ; you trust in the suffering Servant. And that’s the way out of the darkness.

You know, I’ll tell you this just as I finish up here. I’ll never forget. I was in my very first pastorate. And I had a woman come to me within three months wanting to meet with me. And so I met with her.

And here was her problem. She said to me, “Pastor, I just have one question for you.” I said, “Okay.”

She said, “I know that our sins are forgiven up to the point of our confession of faith in Jesus Christ.” But she said, “What about the sins we commit after having professed faith in Christ?” She said, “I think we have to pay for those at the final judgment.”

Now what I said to her at the time was that I took her to Colossians and I said, “What do you make of this when he says that He forgave us all of our sins?” And I would take her to that text again.

But I’ll tell you what other text I would take her to. I would take her to this text. And I would say to her, “If you think that you can trust Christ up to the point of profession but that you can light your own fire after that, you’re in deep trouble, because you’ll be walking by the light of your own fire. And that’s only going to lead to destruction. You need to be trusting in Christ throughout, all the way up until the point of your death. And then He’ll come and take you.”

But the point is, at no time can you start in faith and end in works. At no time can you start in trust and end by kindling your own fire and doing your own thing, finding your

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own forgiveness and some other such thing. It can’t be done, or else you’ll go down to destruction.

And that’s a good word for us all. I think we have a tendency to let grace sort of slip away, again because the uses of the law are not firmly fixed in our thinking. And yet grace should be believed, firm in our thinking. And this is a passage that reminds us how to do that. Okay.

Mike Davis: It reminds me of Galatians where Paul said, *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? You began by the Spirit.”*

Jeff: And now you’re going to finish by works? O yeah; good on you, right? Any other questions or thoughts? We’re out of time, but any final things? No? Okay. Good to see you men; let me pray.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given us, for the blessing of Your word. Father, we thank You for this season of the year, a reminder of the death and the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray now that You will bless us and strengthen us by that grace in the Lord. And we pray, Father, that a text like this one will not only remind us of His work—both the passive and active aspects of it—but that You will remind us afresh of the great Savior that we have, and to put our trust wholly in Him, for we ask it in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)