

8633U

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL - 1998

YAHWEH IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG

BEHOLD MY SERVANT

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #3 He has Laboured in Vain

Reading: Isaiah 49: 1-6

Thank you brother chairman, and my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well then, Isaiah 49 and the second servant song as we've had it read together in the first 6 verses of this particular chapter. Here is a song that is different than the first. In the first song you'll remember that the servant was introduced to us and we saw some of the background in the life and in the times of good king Hezekiah of Judah. But really the tone of this song is a little different, isn't it? let's just start with our translations, shall we? and let's see if we can capture the mood and the spirit of this second song, here in Isaiah 49. So let's just read through what we have! 'Hearken, O isles, unto Me; and listen, O peoples from far, Yahweh hath called me from the womb; from my mother's midst mentioned my name. And hath set my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand did He hide me, yea, He made of me a polished arrow; in His quiver He laid me in store, and said to me, My servant art thou, Israel, in whom I will break into glory. And I, I said, in vain have I laboured, for waste and for wind my strength have I spent. Surely, my right is with Yahweh and the reward of my work with my Elohim. But now saith Yahweh, moulding me from the womb to be His own servant, to turn again Jacob towards Him and that Israel unto Him might be gathered; and I am of honour in the eyes of Yahweh, and my Elohim have become my strength. Yea, He saith, It's too small a thing for being my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob or gather the survivors of Israel, so I will set thee a light of the nations to be My salvation to the end of the earth'.

So what is the spirit then of this song? Well, I think one of the key ideas is that of the intimate relationship that we have between the two heroes of the song, the ideal servant and the God whom he serves. Do you see the spirit of these words? 'He hath called me from the womb, He hath mentioned my name, He hath hid me in the shadow of His hand, He has called me a servant that I might glorify Him. Surely my right and my reward is with Him, He has moulded me, He has called me, He has strengthened me, He has succoured me, He has sent me to be His salvation to the ends of the earth'. There's a tremendously intimate relationship here between the servant and the God whom he serves. In fact, so intimate a relationship that we are lead slowly but inevitably as we progress through this song, to this irresistible conclusion that there is something

more than a Master-servant relationship here, that this servant is not only the servant of his Master, but the Son of his Master; and that the servant that we'll see in these songs is not simply the servant of a bondsman, but the love and devotion of filial obedience because the Master is also the Father of this servant. We're going to be led to that inevitable feeling as the song gradually unfolds the life of the servant before us.

So what do we have then in Isaiah 49 verse 1, just look at these words. 'Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from far; Yahweh hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name'. Now this is remarkable! because, you see, what I think we're being told about here, is the uniqueness of this particular man. There's something special about the servant of this particular chapter, and in particular this first verse. You see, this really takes us back to our earlier study: now imagine this, and I'm going to trace this through for you in the life of Hezekiah. Do you think there was an application to these words in the days of Ahaz concerning the birth of Hezekiah? Remember what it said in Isaiah 7, 'therefore Yahweh Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel'. Now in Isaiah 7 this promise is given to Ahaz as a guarantee that the Davidic line would be assured, that it would never be cut off because a son was to be born and a virgin shall conceive. Now we all know that the prophecy of the virgin birth of Isaiah 7, as our brother David has already covered, ultimately is going to flow forth into Matthew 1, isn't it? it's going to be the promise of the birth of Christ, the seed of the woman of Genesis 3; but there were going to be some foreshadowings. I think one of the greatest foreshadowings of the virgin birth was the birth of Hezekiah himself, and this was the sign given to his father, 'behold a virgin' (an almah - 5959) shall conceive and bring forth a son' so that the Davidic line should be assured.

Now I want you to come back to 2 Chronicles for a moment, and have a look at the history of the birth of Hezekiah, because I think, here is the man of whom the servant song speaks. The servant song says in this first verse, 'Yahweh hath called me from the womb and from the bowels of my mother, He hath made mention of my name'; now come and have a look at the historical background then of the life of the king himself. In 2 Chronicles 28 we notice this, in verse 19 this is to show how wicked his father Ahaz was; he was so dreadful a man that verse 19 says, 'For Yahweh brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel'; (he never was a king of Israel, b&s, he was the king of Judah, but in spirit and in heart this man was so apostate, he transgressed so sorely against God that he's described in the narrative that he was a veritable king of Israel; he was a faithless man). This is the father of Hezekiah, this is the man who is going to bring forth this son.

So what was his boy like? Well, 2 Chronicles 29 verse 1 tells us this concerning the advent of Hezekiah. Now just read these words carefully! 'Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah'. So you see, here is the story of the Chronicles' record of the birth of this man Hezekiah. You see what the record says about him! it says that 'his mother's name was Abijah' but there's

no mention of his father. Did you notice that? no mention of Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 29 verse 1 when Hezekiah comes to the throne, only the mention of his mother; this boy grew up totally unlike his father, did he not? he was nothing like Ahaz. Hezekiah really repudiated the heritage and lineage of his father! So who did Hezekiah look to for his guidance and his counsel? why, from a godly mother! and do you know what his mother's name means, b&s? do you know what 'Abijah' means? it means 'Yahweh is his father' (29); whose father? father to the boy. Yahweh is his father and the only father, I believe that what Hezekiah acknowledged was the fatherhood of Almighty God in heaven above and the godly influence of his beloved mother, Abijah; he had nothing to do with his earthly father, Ahaz. Do you see what the song says in Isaiah 49 verse 1, 'Yahweh hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother He hath made mention of my name', who is the servant of the servant song, who from the earliest point of his life, acknowledges the influence of God upon him, and his mother, and makes no mention of his father? I think, when we look at the history of Hezekiah, we have a man who basically is as close to the virgin birth as we could possibly have; a man who had a mother and the influence of Almighty God from heaven above, they were the only two sources that Hezekiah acknowledged, and he grew up straight and true, absolutely unlike his own father, Ahaz, whom he repudiated. You see, I think he's the servant of the servant song! He's the servant of Isaiah 49 verse 1, who's acutely conscious of the divine influence in his life and of his mother, but of none other. So also in the life of the Lord we're going to read in Matthew 1 that Mary, the handmaiden of the LORD, would have the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her, the power of the Highest, so that this special Son might be brought forth, and He also would be the product of a godly mother and the influence from above of the Deity Himself. A virgin birth prophecy would be worked out in its fullness in the life of the Lord, but I think it was foreshadowed in the experiences of good king Hezekiah of Judah.

Interestingly enough, in one of the psalms he wrote, Psalm 116 Hezekiah is going to say, 'O Yahweh, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid', now where are we going to find those words echoed later one; the son of thine handmaid, isn't that the very words of Mary in Luke 1? 'be it unto thine handmaid according to the Word of the LORD'. You see, this was a special birth, the birth of this boy, Hezekiah, who would change the destiny of his nation, who would act as a wonderful reformer, with reformer's zeal utterly unlike his earthly father. He's the man of this song, who knows only the influence of Yahweh upon him and of his mother, and of course, this principle is a principle that's true for others as well, not just for Hezekiah, and not just for the Lord Jesus Christ. We're told that David felt like this in Psalm 71 verses 5 and 6; we're told that Jeremiah felt like this in Jeremiah 1 verses 4 and 5; we're told that Paul felt like this in Galatians 1 verse 15, they all felt the influence of God in their lives as a guiding influence. We're told in Ephesians 1 verses 4 and 5, that all those who are called to be the servants of God, will appreciate His hand working in their lives from the earliest moments of time. You see, what we're being told here is that Hezekiah, even as a little boy, was conscious of the hand of God upon him, 'from my mother's midst, He's made mention of my name', and we also, b&s, if we are to be the servants of God, will be conscious of the divine influence in our lives!

And to the divine influence, we add in this verse, of course, the influence of a godly woman. How many outstanding characters can you think of in the bible record, who were nurtured by an outstanding woman in the truth? How many godly young men grew up to be famous in the nation of Israel as the result of a godly mother? this is something that mothers ought never to forget, the tremendous influence for good, for the spiritual development of young people, of children, so that they might grow up strong and honest and true in the things of the truth! This is an influence in a home that should never be underestimated!

So the song goes on to say in the second verse of this special man who acknowledges God's influence upon him, 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and hath made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me'. So you see, here we are told in the second verse that the servant is someone who has special powers of speech; the idea of the sword and the arrow, by the way, because I think the phrase 'polished shaft' really has reference to an arrow and some other translations translate it that way. The idea here is of the power of speech that the servant has, but not any sort of speech, this is the speech that will expose motive (a sharp sword) and touch conscience (a polished arrow); the words of the servant would cut at deceit and would pierce hypocrisy. His mouth was going to be a weapon in God's hand to fight the battles of the truth, this is not the eloquence of the flesh, b&s, Isaiah 49 verse 2, but it is the keen edge of the truth itself, in the life and in the mouth of this one. This really is, by the way, the antithesis of Isaiah 42 verse 2, remember when it said, 'he shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets', and didn't we learn from that, that there's a time in the servant's life when he withdrew, when it was inappropriate to engage in battle or controversy. Well, here's the other side of that story now in chapter 49 verse 2, 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword or a polished arrow', in other words, there are times in the work of the servant's labours, when he is capable and it is necessary for him, to advance the cause of the truth, by using the sword of the spirit. Certainly those in the time of the Lord learnt to understand that, didn't they? they learnt to understand that this man would only withdraw because it was not profitable, not because He was frightened of them. When the time came for the Lord to do battle with the Pharisees, He would demolish them so comprehensively, so brilliantly with the sharp sword of the scripture, that they would wish that they had never engaged swords with Him. He left them with their self righteous conceits in tatters and their impure motives stripped bare by the sharpness of His blade. So there are times, says the second servant song, there are times when such an approach is called for, but we need to be careful, don't we? we need to be very careful before we unleash swords and arrows in the service of the truth. We need to be very careful that what we are doing is truly advancing the cause of the truth; that this is really the best thing for the truth at this particular time, and secondly, not only must we be sure that it's the right thing to do for the right reasons, but that our own character is consistent with our words. There's nothing worse in the truth, b&s, than a man who speaks forth words where all the congregation knows that he does not live them. The sharp sword and the polished arrow of the servant here, are the words that are consistent absolutely with his own life

and with his own character.

Do you see how he gets these words? did you notice what the verse said! read it carefully! 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; He hath made me a polished shaft in His quiver hath He hid me'. So do you see what the second verse is telling us? it's telling us that the servant doesn't claim these powers of speech as inherent genius in his own right. The servant doesn't say, 'well, this is a natural ability that I have of myself, God has made him what he is, God has sharpened the sword and polished the arrow. So the sharpness of the blade here and the polishing of the shaft, the edge in the brilliance of his speech, do not come from himself, they come from says the verse and note this carefully, from solitude with God, (in the shadow of His hand). You know, I think there's a great lesson here for life in the truth, and that's this, that we should never underestimate the importance of adequate preparation for our work and labours in the truth. I know when we're young we're keen to get on with things and there's many things that we wish to accomplish, but there's also a need for proper and adequate preparation if we are to be the Lord's servants. It's like any other great labour, every good work needs adequate preparation; one cannot be a physician unless one has studied long and hard so that one can master the subject that one is about to become proficient in! It's exactly the same in the truth here, in the matter of the service of the truth, we need to be prepared. We can't rush up and say wonderful things from the truth's point of view, unless first we have been polished and sharpened; and you see what the verse says, it says that that sharpening and that polishing takes place in the shadow of God's hand, it's solitude with God; not merely in the shadow, notice, but in the shadow that's God's influence!

So how do we do that? Well, I think this means that for every brother and sister in the truth there are times in our lives that we must make and that we must find time when we withdraw into the shadow of God's hand. It means that in the rush and bustle of everyday life, which does press in upon us greatly, does it not? that somehow we've got to find the time to withdraw into the solitude of God's presence and that means perhaps for a brother when all the family is finally settled down for the night, and all the world has gone to sleep, that a brother finally withdraws into his bible and into his books. There, for a brief and precious moment he's there alone in the shadow of God's hand, in the stillness of the night or the hushed quietness of the early morning. It does not matter when the time is, whatever is best for you, but there is a need to withdraw into the shadow of God's hand that we might be sharpened and polished. There is no other way if we wish to be God's servants!

and whatever is true for a brother, is equally true for all sisters. Perhaps especially for mothers, that somehow they must find that moment of, shall we say, relative calm somewhere in the middle of the day, when they can withdraw with their bible and their book and find solace and solitude in the things of the truth; she has to organize her day so that she can do that, so she can find solitude in the shadow of God's hand.

Do you know what it said in 2 Chronicles 29 (you don't need to turn it up again, we just read it) it said, 'Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to reign'; what do we know

about Hezekiah's first 25 years? The answer is absolutely nothing, where was he? and the answer is, b&s, he was hid in the shadow of God's hand for 25 years; before he came to the throne, he had been polished and sharpened. What do we know of the Lord Jesus Christ? but one brief moment at age 12 in the temple, and apart from that, the curtain falls on the life of the Lord in His early years, does it not? and it's not until 30 years later, 30 years after the birth of this boy, that we see Him striding out across the fields to begin His ministry, but for 30 years the shadow has fallen over the life of Christ and He's been hid with God. Well so also with us, b&s, so also with us must it be! and for this purpose!

For the 3rd verse goes on to say, that this God who has sharpened and polished His servant, hath said unto him, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified'. So here's the purpose of it all, here's the man that stands before us as having been prepared by the divine hand in every way, the words He speaks are not His own, the will He expresses is not His own, the purpose He advances is not His own; this servant is the embodiment of His Master's will, and His Master's purpose. You know, to me one of the most remarkable things about the 3rd verse is this, is that what this is telling us, for all the greatness and majesty of the Deity, He requires a medium for the manifestation of His glory. God's glory, His moral excellence cannot be revealed by itself in the abstract, it needs a vehicle through whom that glory might be revealed, and that's what the servants are there for, 'thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom, through whom, by which means the Father Himself might be glorified. That's what it means to be God's servants, it means that we are to be the vehicles for the revelation of the glory of God on the face of the earth. That's what we've been called to, that's what God requires of us!

Yet that way is not easy, is it? the work of service is not easy, it's a work that's often fraught with difficulty sometimes with danger, sometimes with despair. The servants of God are obliged to put up with all manner of discomfort and we do so because we believe that we are God's servants. The servant is conscious of the divine influence in his life, but that doesn't mean that the servant is immune from feelings; the servant is affected by his circumstances, he gets depressed by opposition and obstacles and difficulties; we see that even in the life of the Lord from time to time, there were moments that Christ struggled with His work as a servant, and so I think there were times in Hezekiah's life when he felt desperate despair at being the servant of God, in whom Almighty God would be glorified, and that really therefore, is the spirit of the 4th verse, isn't it? because you see what he says now in Isaiah 49 and verse 4.

He says, 'Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain;'. Come and have a look at Isaiah 37 for a moment: so the song says 'I have spent my strength for nought', do you notice that in chapter 37 we read these words in the 3rd verse, 'And they said unto him (that is to Isaiah the prophet) Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth', and that's the same word in the Hebrew as Isaiah 49 verse 4 (3581) 'I have spent my strength for

nought'. You see, this is Hezekiah in his moment of despair, there's a crisis on in his life and he felt that he had no strength left to bring forth the children of the nation. 'I've got nothing left', says the king, 'there's no strength to bring them forth, I've spent it all', he says. That's the spirit of Isaiah 49 and verse 4, you see, I think what this verse is telling us is that Hezekiah felt in his own life that he'd given all his strength for the nation. He felt absolutely dissipated, no vigour, he felt all his force drained away from him in the course of his service, absolutely depleted of power, the constant strain upon his energies. Not only does he feel that he has no strength that it's all been spent, but he also feels somehow, and isn't this the spirit of Isaiah 49 and verse 4? clearly we're being told that there was a sense in which the servant suddenly has this desperate feeling that all that he's done, have been for no purpose whatsoever, it's all in vain! So despite the fact that God has polished him and prepared him, and called him from the very earliest time of his life, the servant here is gripped by a feeling of deep despair and great depression and he cries out in this verse, doesn't he? 'I've laboured in vain', now do you think that happened in the life of Hezekiah? oh yes, I think it did!

Now let me show you what happened in the life of Hezekiah. You see, really the story of Hezekiah is the story of two twin crisis that are entwined together at the same moment in his life. Come and have a look at 2 Kings 18 because here's what happened: we're told quite clearly in the record actually, that the two things merged together in one dramatic tragedy, all simultaneously in his life. It was a dreadful time for Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18, now this is what we're told in terms of the way these two twin problems came together; in 2 Kings 18 verse 1 it says, 'Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi or Abijah (as we know) the daughter of Zachariah'. So not only do we know that he was 25 when he began to reign, verse 2, but we know that he reigned 29 years (so we need to take a note of that), 29 years he reigned.

Now turn over to the 13th verse of the same chapter, when did the Assyrian come against him? Well, we're told in 2 Kings 18 and verse 13, 'Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them', and finally, of course, he comes up against Jerusalem itself. So out of 29 years of the reign of this man, we have the crisis of the Assyrian invasion in the 14th year of his reign. Now we come over the page a little further, of course, to 2 Kings 20 and we read these words in verse 1, 'In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death'; in those days, what days were those days? well, they were the days of the invasion of the Assyrian, and so what we're being told in 2 Kings 20 verse 1, is that at the very same time as the Assyrian came against Jerusalem, why, that's the very moment that Hezekiah was smitten with his dreadful illness, that was going to, in fact, take his life away, 'thou shalt die and not live', it was at the very same time. Now can we confirm that?

Well, yes, the answer is, I think we can because do you see what it says in the 6th

verse, that part of the response of God through the voice of Isaiah the prophet was, 'I will add unto thy days 15 years'; now if he reigned for 29 years according to 2 Kings 18 verse 1, and Sennacherib comes in the 14th year (so we know the Assyrian arrives or invades in the 14th year) and yet this verse tells us that he's got 15 years added which makes up to 29; if we take 15 years off 29, what year of his reign do we come back to for the recovery of his sickness? the answer is the 14th year, these two things came upon him like a double tragedy at the same time! The invasion of the Assyrian and the mortal sickness from whence there was doubt that he would ever recover, and do you see how these two things are brought in the record together in 2 Kings 20 and verse 4, when the answer is going to come back to the king as a result of his weeping sore, before God.

Look at this, verse 4, isn't this a lovely point? did you notice this, 2 Kings 20 verse 4, 'It came to pass afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court', you see, Hezekiah has just turned his face to the wall to pray to God, and before Isaiah had got to the other side of the building, he's already got the answer to bring back to Hezekiah. Isn't this the Lord's words in Matthew, 'that the LORD knoweth those things that ye have need of before ye ask Him'. So if God, by the way, does know all the things we need before we even pray to Him, why do we need to pray if God already knows? the answer is, of course, isn't it? that it's not so God can know but so that God knows that we know what it is that we need. That's why we pray to God, so it's understood that we know what we need, as we confess those needs before the Father; and so Isaiah treading his way with heavy heart, having given this message to the king, before he gets to the other side, the voice of God tells him to go and give this message to the king. Do you see how the two crisis of Hezekiah's life are joined together in the answer of verse 5, do you see it there?

'Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of My people, Thus saith Yahweh, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of Yahweh. And I will add unto thy days 15 years' (this is the promise of recovery from sickness) and then the rest of the verse, 'AND I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for mine own sake'. You see, he was going to be delivered from sickness and from the Assyrian at the same time, because both these tragedies lay upon him at the same time, and I think that's the moment of Isaiah 49 verse 4 when the king says, 'I've laboured in vain, I've spent my strength for nought'.

So come back then to Isaiah 49 and let's just capture the spirit of that moment in the life of the king. So here's Hezekiah then, he's chosen to rebel against his overlord, the Assyrian is now encamped at the door, the jeering taunts of Rabshakeh have already instilled fear into the heart of the faithless, destruction appears imminent, all appears lost, and if ever there was a time when the nation of Israel needed the strength of their king to rally them to the things of the truth. It was right now and at the very moment when the king was desperately needed by his people, he's struck low with an illness that confines him to his bedchamber; at the crucial moment he's smitten with leprosy, the beloved city's threatened with sacking, the people threatened with cruel captivity,

the royal line of David threatened with extinction, Hezekiah's own life threatened with termination, was there ever a worst moment in the life of the king? Can you not see him in his bedchamber, whispering with his face towards the wall? 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought', yes, I think this was the moment of Hezekiah's life that we're dealing with here.

Isaiah 38, 'In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death', and do you see those words at the end of the verse there, at the end of verse 3, 'and Hezekiah wept sore', this is the moment of his life, I think we're talking about here, Hezekiah wept sore; Psalm 102, I think, by the way, is a Psalm written by Hezekiah, if you read Psalm 102 you'll find a whole series of remarkable parallels with Isaiah 38, it's the same circumstance. Psalm 102 and Isaiah 38 are inextricably linked together, I think this is psalm of Hezekiah. Do you see what the title for the psalm is? 'a prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before Yahweh'; 'I have laboured in vain', this is the moment that the king had come to and he felt the weakness of that moment sorely in his life. Yet, b&s, there was a reason behind all of that, wasn't there? by the way, I think this was also written at the same time, a song of degrees - Psalm 130, Hezekiah's lament , 'Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Yahweh', this was a low point in his life, wasn't it? He really felt that despair and that anguish of heart, and I think that psalm is one of the other breathings of that particular time in Hezekiah's life, and yet all of this we said, was for a reason, we believe. All of this was for the development of the servant's character, all of this was in some strange and definite way, for the strengthening of Hezekiah, for the work that he would subsequently accomplish amongst the nation.

So the lesson, I think, of verse 4 of Isaiah 49 is, that God allows His servants a measure of trouble! Why does God do that? why does God bring adversity upon His own servants? The reason, b&s, is because adversity is a great purifier of motive! Adversity is a great purifier of motive, you see, when trial comes in the matters of the truth, those who are not truly God's servants, collapse and faint and fall away and go elsewhere. But the true servant carries on, in fact, what the true servant does as Isaiah 49 verse 4 is now going to go on and show us, what the true servant does in time of difficulty and in time of despair, is he turns to wait upon his God, despite his despair, despite his deepest misgivings. So you see what the verse goes on to say, 'Yet surely my judgment is with Yahweh, and my work with my God' or literally as the Hebrew is, 'my right and my reward are with God', so he buoys up his spirit with the realization that whatever might happen to him, his service although it might be for others, is ultimately on behalf of God. What God will do, b&s, in all our lives, is that He has promised to judge us, not so much on the success of our work, as on the dedication of our hearts. Even in the truth, our labours as God's servants are not always crowned with success, the Father doesn't judge us on necessarily the success of our labours, He **judges us** on the dedication of our hearts. Don't you think that the spirit of verse 4 as the servant tries to buoy up his spirits again, in confidence of his God, don't you think that that spirit probably was reached as a result of prayer in his life? Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to God, and it was a result of that prayer to God that the servant

recovers his spirits, isn't it?

So he says in verse 5, 'And now saith Yahweh that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to Him; Though Israel be not gathered yet shall I **be glorious in the eyes of Yahweh**, and my God **shall be my strength**.' The word 'glorious' here literally in the Hebrew means 'to carry weight', 'to be weighty' (3513) and I think what we're being told here is that the servant carries weight with God. The servant carries weight with God, God considers the needs of His servant and the servant comforts himself with this realization, that the servant's distress, his plea for help, his need for encouragement, this are all things that count highly with God, and the servant says, 'Look, whatever problems might come upon me, whatever difficulties I might have, I shall carry weight in the eyes of my God and my Elohim have become my strength! My Elohim have become my strength as it should be rendered, you see, these are the words of experiential knowledge, aren't they? This is the cry of a servant who has felt the hand of the angels in his life, my Elohim have become my strength, and I think Hezekiah felt the hand of God upon him, the answer of God upon him. It's the perspective of that knowledge that carries the servants through whatever crisis might come upon them.

So Isaiah 49 verse 6 says, 'He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth'. Now I know we've mentioned this before, and so I'm going to mention it again, because we come to it eventually at the end of the story, you see, that in a very special way these words would come true in the life of Hezekiah. As a result of the marvellous deliverance that would occur from the hand of the Assyrian, Hezekiah, the king of Judah, would be set forth as a light to all the nations round about; we'll see that, we'll see that worked out in the history of the times, it became remarkably true! Hezekiah's influence would extend out beyond Judah and beyond Israel and there would be a marvellous work of deliverance that would leave the nations themselves gasping with astonishment, at the wonder of this man, through whom such a remarkable deliverance had been wrought. Do you notice the paradox of verse 6? this is really something to think about! Do you know what verse 6 teaches us, b&s, it teaches us that **difficulty in our service, does not abrogate our role as servants**, because you see what God does to comfort His servant in his time of distress, He says verse 6, 'I'm going to deepen your service, I'm going to increase your labours, I'm going to extend the work that I'm going to ask you to accomplish; not just to raise up the tribes of Israel, but to be a light to the Gentiles'. Now what a paradox that here is a man who cries in distress because of the burden that lies upon him of being God's servant, and the comforting reply that comes back from Almighty God is, 'I'll give you more work to do! I'll increase your labours', now there's a paradox that needs to be worked out in our own lives, if we are to understand what it really means to be God's servants.

So, brethren and sisters, the question then of these verses, Isaiah 49 verses 1 to 6, where is Christ then, in all of this story? Well, I think that this actually takes us to a

specific moment in the life of the Lord as well as in the life of Hezekiah. I think the clue is verse 3, 'He said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified', of course, you know who got that name, don't you? who got the name of Israel? and the answer is Jacob. When exactly was Jacob given the name of Israel? and the answer is at the time of his wrestlings. At the time of his wrestlings! when was the great wrestlings of Christ? but the garden of Gethsemane! Do you know that when the Lord began His journey to the garden (you don't need to turn it up but you might like to take a note of the reference) as the Lord walked out of the Upper Room with His disciples to go to the garden of Gethsemane, He lifted up His voice in prayer and He said these words, 'Father, the hour is come, **glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify Thee**', do you know where the spirit of those words come from? Isn't that Isaiah 49 verse 3? 'thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified'. Glorify thy Son that they Son may glorify Thee, that's John 17 verse 1, you see, I believe that the second servant song was in the mind of the Lord as He walked toward Gethsemane on that occasion; and when He got to the garden, well, let's have a look at that, shall we? come and have a look at Mark 14 and let's have a look at Christ in the garden of wrestling, once He got there.

Because we're told in Mark 14 and reading from verse 26 it says, 'And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives; of course, the margin's correct, isn't it? when it says, 'when they had sung an hymn, it wasn't just a hymn, was it? it was a psalm says the margin, and do you know what psalm that might have been? You see, they used to sing the Hallel psalms as part of the Passover celebration, and the Hallel psalms were Psalms 111 to 118, but they were sung in two sections, 111 to 115 earlier on, and then at the end of the celebration, they sang Psalms 115 to 118 at the conclusion of the meeting, and I think those were the psalms that were sung in Mark 14 verse 26, those numbered 115 to 118. I think those psalms were on the mind of the Lord as he walked into the garden, and we're told that when He got to the garden, well it says this, verse 33, 'He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death'. You know, another translation of that phrase, 'encompassed with grief is my soul unto death', and I think the Lord was quoting from a psalm. Now, you've never guess what psalm that would be, but it just happens to be psalm 116, which is one of the psalms that they've just sung, before leaving the Upper Room; it just happens to be a psalm that we believe was written by, why! good king Hezekiah of Judah, at the time of his distress.

Now have a look at this psalm 116 and verse 1, a psalm, I believe, of Hezekiah (I haven't got time to show you that today but I believe it was and there are other good evidences later on in the body of this psalm), and I think this was the psalm of Hezekiah's distress that came into the mind of the Lord, as He threw Himself down among the gnarled olive trees of Gethsemane in an abandonment of grief and prayer. And He cries 'encompassed with grief is My soul unto death', and the psalm had said, verse 3, 'the sorrows of death compassed Me and the pains of hell get cold unto Me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then

called I upon the name of Yahweh; O Yahweh, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul'. Whilst there may have been other scriptural passages that the Lord had in mind in the garden,

I'm sure this was one of them! a prayer of Hezekiah at the time of his distress. I think that this is the time of the second servant song in the life of Christ. Can you imagine that this would have been appropriate for Christ, b&s, to say at that time in the garden, 'I have laboured in vain'?

The Lord bore the full consequence of Adam's sins and his nature, and so in His life, He experienced a full measure of sorrow, beyond even the anguish of Hezekiah. He knew an unsettled and transient existence, Luke 9 verse 58; He was opposed and menaced, Luke 4 and 29; He suffered the indifference of His family, John 7 verse 5; He experienced the maligning of His own kin, Mark 3 verse 31; He felt the disappointment as many of His disciples turned away, John 6 verse 66; He endured the grief of being betrayed by a close companion, John 13 verse 18; He agonized over a mission that failed, Matthew 23 verse 27; He felt the futility of apparent labour in vain, Luke 19 verses 41-42; He wrestled with gripping anguish in Gethsemane, Matthew 26 verses 37-38; and in the end, He was left alone, bereft of all support, Mark 14 verses 49-52. Do you not think that it was here in the garden, b&s, that the Lord would have prayed, 'I have laboured in vain'. He experienced those same distresses, didn't He?

Do you know what the record tells us in the gospels? It tells us, b&s, that Almighty God heard the cries of His servant and His Son on that occasion; Almighty God heard the cries of His servant and His Son and Luke's gospel tells us that God responded and He did something. What did He do? It says that He sent an angel from heaven strengthening Him and do you know what the Psalmist said, did you notice that in Isaiah 49? you see, this was the fulfilment of the song surely in the life of the Lord, He sent an angel to Him strengthening Him, and Isaiah 49 verse 5 says at the end of the verse, 'And my Elohim have become My strength'. God answered His servant in the garden, at the moment of His gripping anguish, in just the same way that He answered Hezekiah in his moment of greatest need.

So now, b&s, where are we in the second servant song? Well, if you have ever felt the frustration of being hampered by the weakness of the flesh, if you have ever felt the pain of physical incapacity, if you've ever had the anguish of hateful slander, if you have ever experienced the grief of spite and malice, if you've ever had the feeling of hopeless labour and futile effort, if you've ever experienced or borne the stress of the work being undermined by others, if you've ever felt your powers of endurance stretched to the limit and beyond, if you've ever felt sick, spent and exhausted in the work of the truth, then know that we're not alone. We are in the grand company of our Lord Jesus Christ and others like Hezekiah who fellowshipped Him; and we need to have the spirit of this song, don't we? in our own lives, and we need to turn to God and wait upon Him, and to realize that our right and our reward are with Him, and that nothing else matters! and that there are times when God's servants shall be brought to the very edge of hopelessness and to the brink of despair, so that we might stand back and see the Father turn a hopeless reversal into an amazing and triumphant advancement, as did Hezekiah! and as did the Lord! to learn as did they, b&s, that it is His work and not ours, and that as God's servants we are only instruments in His hand, so that He might be

glorified. We need to learn to feel the power of prayer and the comforting knowledge that He is able to strengthen and to sustain us, if we trust in Him.

Now a quotation to take up the second servant song in the New Testament. Come to 2 Corinthians 6 and let's just see if we can find some words here in the New Testament that take up the spirit of the song and apply them now in our own lives. 2 Corinthians 6 and here we have surely the spirit of the second servant song, verse 1, 'We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (oh, where does that word come from? that's out of Isaiah 49, isn't it?) and the plea of the apostle Paul is that we might not be so gripped with grief and anguish that we **lack appreciation of what God has done in our lives as workers together with Him**; don't receive the grace of God in vain, he says. Verse 2, 'I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation'; you know, b&s, in my margin verse 2 is cross referenced to Psalm 69, have any of you got that? Well, it's not Psalm 69, it's Isaiah 49 and verse 8, just after the end of the second servant song; if you check the reference carefully, you'll find that 2 Corinthians 6 verse 2 is a quotation from Isaiah 49 verse 8; it's true that Isaiah 49 is in turn a quotation, we believe, from Psalm 69, but the apostle is drawing his words from the book of the second servant song, from the chapter of the second servant song, to encourage us that God has heard us in our hour of need.

Verse 3, 'Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God'. Of course, the word 'ministry' (1248) there and the word 'minister' (1249) ought to be translated 'servants'; that the 'service' be not blamed, that in all things we should approve ourselves as the 'servants' of God'. In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labour, watchings, fastings'. You see, these are the things that anguish the heart of the servant in the second servant song, as he's gripped with distress. The promise of this chapter is **that whatever might come upon us, God is all powerful to lift His servants out and above and beyond all troubles that they might have!**

Verse 9, 'As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed: As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing **all** things'. So we shall, b&s, so we shall possess all things if we learn to put our trust in our God, and to feel the power of His hand working upon us, and in us and through our lives, as did the Lord and as did Hezekiah the servant of Yahweh in the day of his own probation. '

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord'.